Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching

Between the Tides

Volume III

Foreword vi
A Message from the President of the STLHE vii

Section I: Practice and Engagement

1 Rising With the Tide: Applying Adaptive Mentorship in the Professional Practicum
   Edwin G. Ralph & Keith Walker 3

2 Clickers 201: Exploring the Next Levels of Using Classroom Response Systems in Science Courses
   Tanya Noel 9

3 Qui a Peur d’une Pédagogie Différentielle des Sexes?
   Claude Lamontagne 15

4 Responding to the Challenging Dilemma of Faculty Engagement in Research on Teaching and
   Learning and Disciplinary Research
   Natasha Kenny & Frederick Evers 21

5 Exploring Identities Through Poetic Inquiry: Heartful Journeys Into Tangled Places of
   Complicated Truths and Desires
   John J. Guiney Yallop, Kathleen Naylor, Shamimara Sharif, & Nancy Taylor 27

6 Moving (Literally) to Engage Students: Putting the (Physically) Active in Active Learning
   William B. Strean 33
7  Videoconference Teaching for Graduate Courses in Educational Administration  
   *Ken Brien*  

8  Creativity and Writing: The Postcard Project  
   *Mercedes Rowinsky-Geurts*  

9  Quality Matters: A Faculty-Centred Program to Assure Quality in Online Course Design  
   *Kay Shattuck*  

10 Inspiring Writing in the Sciences: An Undergraduate Electronic Journal Project  
    *Peggy Pritchard & Dan Thomas*  

11 Learning Portfolios: Creative Connections Between Formal and Informal Learning  
    *Alice Cassidy*  

Section II: Identity and Community  

12 Canadian Educational Development Centre Websites: More Ebb Than Flow?  
   *Nicola Simmons*  

13 Paddle Your Own Canoe: Metaphors for Teaching Between the Tides  
   *W. Alan Wright, Marie-Jeanne Monette, & Beverley Hamilton*  

14 Conversations and Collaborations  
   *Cynthia Korpan*  

15 Academic In/Civility: Co-Constructing the Foundation for a Civil Learning Community  
   *Zopito Marini, Christine Polihronis, & Wendy Blackwell*  

16 Culture and Ethics in First Nations Educational Research  
   *Josiah Taylor, Evie Plaice, & Imelda Perley*  

17 Des Dilemmes Normatifs dans l’Enseignement du Français Langue Maternelle dans les Universités Anglocanadiennes : Le Cas de l’Université de Windsor  
   *Jean-Guy Mboudjeke*  

18 Electronic Social Networks, Teaching, and Learning  
   *Anne Banks Pidduck*  

19 Two Sides of the Same Coin: Student-Faculty Perspectives of the Course Syllabus  
   *Jeanette McDonald, Gillian Siddall, Deena Mandell, & Sandy Hughes*  

20 Learning That Matters: Discovery of Meaning and Development of Wisdom in Undergraduate Education  
   *Thomas Mengel*  

21 Enriching Social Work Through Interdisciplinary Disability Studies  
   *Irene Carter, Christine Quaglia, & Donald Leslie*
### Section III: Development and Transitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors/Editors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>High to Low Tide: The High School-University Transition</td>
<td>David C. Stone</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>No Dilemma at all: The Importance of Liberal Education in Developing Skills for Employability</td>
<td>D. Bruce MacKay</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Developing Effective Guidelines for Faculty Teaching First-Year University Students</td>
<td>Irene Carter, Donald Leslie, &amp; Sarah Moore</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Experiences of New Faculty in a Transitional Institution</td>
<td>Michelle Yeo, Deb Bennett, Cari Merkley, Jane McNichol, Carlton Osakwe, &amp; Carolyn Pada</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Teaching Transdisciplinarity in a Discipline-Centred World</td>
<td>M. Elizabeth Snow, Amy Salmon, &amp; Richard Young</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>L’Étudiant de Niveau Débutant et Intermédiaire en Phonétique Corrective Face aux Outils d’Auto-Apprentissage</td>
<td>Svetla Kaménova</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>How Much Language Do They Need? The Dilemma English-Medium Universities Face When Enrolling English as an Additional Language Students</td>
<td>Janet von Randow</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Two Models for Introducing Graduate Students to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Natasha Patrito Hannon &amp; Svitlana Taraban-Gordon</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>L’Accès et la Réussite au Postsecondaire pour les Étudiants Issus de Groupes Sous-Représentés : Un Défi Collectif</td>
<td>Marie-Jeanne Monette &amp; W. Alan Wright</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Exploring Motivational and Learning Differences With Mature Students in Post-Secondary Education</td>
<td>William C. Murray, Leslie Smith, &amp; Keith Nielson</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Teaching Writing Skills That Enhance Student Success in Future Employment</td>
<td>James P. Coyle</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

The Editors of Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching (CELT) are pleased to present Volume III of this successful, innovative electronic publication associated with the annual conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). Volume III features a remarkable 32 peer-reviewed essays, appearing after an extensive process of submission, revision, and editing.

The idea for CELT dates back to the 2005 STLHE conference hosted by the University of Prince Edward Island. From the beginning, the intent has been to encourage conference presenters to put the essence of their workshops and concurrent, round table, and poster sessions in essay form for a wide readership interested in teaching improvement practices in higher education. Once the CELT structure and format were established, the editors invited those who presented at the 2007 conference at the University of Alberta to submit to Volume I, and the following year, those who presented at the 2008 conference in Windsor to submit to Volume II. The entire first and second volume of CELT can now be accessed on the STHLE website.

The current volume of CELT includes 32 articles arising from material and data presented at the STLHE conference at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton in June, 2009. The articles were chosen after a peer-review process of 40 manuscripts. The fact that there is no printing involved in producing this annual journal has allowed us to expand Volume III of CELT without increasing costs. The 2009 conference theme “Between the Tides” supplies the inspiration for CELT this year. The theme explores the various tensions and debates that pull instructors, faculty, and administrators in different directions.

The structure of Volume III traces major stages in the teaching and learning process as they relate to the theme. Section I deals with Practice and Engagement, Section II with Identity and Community, and Section III with Development and Transitions. This year’s publication also features four French language articles. Please feel free to explore CELT in the order most convenient to you, and to print out one or more of the articles to read and to consult at your leisure.

The Editors once again thank the authors, the reviewers, and the staff of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Windsor for their ongoing efforts to produce CELT. We look forward to examining the theme of the STLHE conference “Creative Teaching and Learning: Exploring, Shaping, Knowing” in Volume IV of CELT, to be distributed at the 2011 Society conference in Saskatoon.

Alan Wright, Margaret Wilson, & Dawn MacIsaac
A Message from the President of the STLHE

I am honoured and delighted to present the third volume of *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching (CELT)*, an anthology of peer-reviewed papers written by presenters at the 2009 conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). Hosted by the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, STLHE 2009 provided an opportunity for university and college administrators, faculty, educational developers, and students to share their scholarship of teaching and learning, present exemplary pedagogical practices, and discuss challenges and successes experienced in the classroom.

This volume features thirty-two articles which were reviewed by individuals from across Canada through a blind peer-review process. I thank all the reviewers for volunteering their time and professional expertise to this scholarly process, and I congratulate all of the authors whose articles were accepted for this volume. I also thank the CELT editors - Alan Wright, Margaret Wilson, and Dawn MacIsaac – whose committed leadership have once again resulted in an outstanding anthology for the benefit of all STLHE members. I am particularly grateful to Jessica Raffoul, the Managing Editor of CELT, whose dedicated efforts, professionalism, and devotion to this project make it a reality year after year. She has once again been ably assisted by an amazing team from the University of Windsor, including Peter Marval who worked on the layout. On behalf of STLHE, I thank Jessica, Peter, and the entire production team from Windsor.

Finally, I hope that you will be enriched by reading the outstanding articles in this volume and that you will be inspired to submit your own scholarship of teaching and learning for possible publication in the next edition of *CELT*.

Sincerely,

Joy Mighty
STLHE President
Section I

Practice and Engagement
Rising With the Tide: Applying
Adaptive Mentorship in the Professional Practicum

Edwin G. Ralph & Keith Walker
University of Saskatchewan

The Adaptive Mentorship (AM) model (formerly called Contextual Supervision) is described and implications are raised for its wider implementation. The researchers derived the AM model from earlier contingency leadership approaches, and during the last two decades, have further refined it. They argue for the transferability of AM, because it may be adapted by mentors in any field to assist protégés in developing professional proficiency in their respective contexts.

Adaptive Mentorship (AM) is a promising model that has proven effective in enhancing the mentorship/supervisory process. We believe that AM (which we formerly called Contextual Supervision) is worthy of consideration for application in any mentorship situation in any field (Ralph, Walker, & Wimmer, 2008a, 2008b). Our reasons for disseminating AM are: (1) the call in the research for better mentorship preparation (Allen & Eby, 2007; Myall, Levett-Jones, & Lathlean, 2008); (2) our own research regarding ongoing weaknesses in mentorship programs (Ralph, 1994; Ralph, Walker, & Wimmer, 2007, 2009); (3) the published endorsement by one of North America’s most prominent management/leadership educators, Dr. Barry Posner (2004); (4) the current initiative of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2006), which has identified the need for professional schools to improve clinical/practical/apprenticeship learning opportunities; (5) our receipt of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Public-Outreach Grant to disseminate AM widely (Ralph & Walker, 2009); and (6) our belief that the mentorship process should be less “mentor-centric.”

The AM Model
AM requires mentors to adjust their helping behaviour in response to the task-specific development

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1 We the authors acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for receipt of a Public Outreach Grant to help disseminate the Adaptive Mentorship model.
needs of their protégés. We represent the AM model in Figure 1.

The outer border of the diagram represents the context of the mentorship relationship that includes psychological, social, organizational, and cultural factors within the practicum/work setting, many of which are unchangeable by the mentor or the protégé. Mentors, however, can change the two dimensions of their mentoring behaviour, shown in the A-grid: their adaptive task response (i.e., the degree of direction regarding the technical, mechanical, or procedural aspect of the protégé’s performance), and their adaptive support response (i.e., the degree of expression regarding the “human” or psycho/social/emotional aspect of the protégé’s learning).

The key element that protégés can modify is their developmental level in performing particular skill-sets, which consists of two dimensions in the D-grid: their developmental competence level (i.e., their ability to perform the task), and their developmental confidence level (i.e., their degree of self-assurance, composure, and feeling of security and/or safety in performing it). The heart of the AM model is represented by the arrows linking the D-quadrants with the A-quadrants, which portray the mentor’s matching one of four adaptive “A” responses with a similarly numbered “D” developmental-level exhibited by the protégé in his/her skill-specific performance.

Applying the AM Model

The application of AM consists of three phases.

1) Determine development level

The first phase is for the pair to determine the existing development level of the protégé to accomplish the specific competency being practiced at the time. As illustrated in the D-grid of Figure 1, a protégé’s skill-specific level of development consists of both his/her competence and his/her confidence levels in ex-

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The mentor matches his/her adaptive response to coincide with the skill-specific developmental level of his/her protégé.
ecuting that task. The D1 quadrant reflects an individual with “low competence” and “high confidence” to accomplish the task (i.e., he/she does not know exactly how to perform it, but is confident, willing, and eager to do so). A protégé at D2 is low on both the competence and confidence dimensions; a learner at D3 shows high competence and low confidence; while a protégé at D4 is high on both.

A mentee’s developmental level may be ascertained in three ways: (1) by the pair’s observations of the novice’s task-specific performance; (2) by the pair’s informal conversations about the protégé’s progress; and (3) by the protégé’s answers to the mentor’s direct questions regarding his/her performance.

These D-levels are skill-set specific, changeable over-time, different for each competency, and not permanent (Ralph, 1998, 2000).

2) Synchronize mentor response

After determining the protégé’s competency-specific level of performance, the mentor must appropriately adapt his/her mentorship response to correspond to the existing developmental level of the mentee.

As depicted in Figure 1, the mentor’s adaptive response also has two dimensions: the degree of support the mentor provides (i.e., the human-relationship aspects of encouragement, positive reinforcement, praise, and psychological/emotional bolstering of the protégé as he/she learns). This support consists of positive words, facial expressions, gestures, and body language. The other response-element is the task dimension (i.e., instruction regarding the technical or mechanical skill, in which the mentor provides procedural directions to the protégé). This task-dimension would involve varied degrees of telling, showing, guiding, demonstrating, advising, directing, or strategizing regarding the protégé’s “technique.” Task can also broaden and deepen protégés’ holistic understanding of professional identity and attending social, ethical, and moral responsibilities. For example, a mentor’s provision of specific directions to the protégé regarding proper conduct and precise protocol in a particular setting illustrates how the latter becomes professionalized into the expected role and deportment of practitioners in the field.

Two key principles in matching the A and D quadrants is that the mentor’s task response must be inverse in magnitude to the extent of the protégé’s competence level; and simultaneously, the extent of the mentor’s support is similarly inversely proportional to the novice’s level of confidence. In short, the degree of mentor response is opposite to that of protégé development.

3) Adapt mentor response

The mentorship pair would continually observe the protégé’s changing developmental level, and the mentor would synchronize his/her adaptive response to match, in inverse proportions, the mentee’s changing development level. As a protégé advances from D1 to D2 to D3 to D4, the mentor would reciprocate by responding correspondingly with A1, A2, A3, and A4 adaptations.

A Specific Example

A brief illustration of how the AM model might function in a nursing preceptorship would be when the mentor observes a nursing student’s performance and deportment in administering health care in a hospital emergency room. If the protégé consistently exhibits a calm and controlled presence under the pressures of that environment; demonstrates a characteristically pleasant and positive demeanor in dealing with patients, patients’ family members, and the protégé’s professional colleagues; and administers required medical procedures and interventions with accuracy and efficiency, then the protégé would be reflecting a D4 level for that particular skill set (i.e., displaying high competence and confidence). The preceptor would consequently match this protégé’s high performance with an A4 response (i.e., with lower levels of task direction and support), because the protégé would not require the preceptor to provide excessive amounts of procedural direction or emotional support for these tasks.

AM Research Findings

Much of the previous research on AM was conducted
with pre-service teachers and their mentors, but some was conducted in early childhood education (Watt, 1998), agricultural education (Fritz & Miller, 2003, 2004), and business management (Posner, 2004). Over the past two decades, we have applied, re-searched, re-adjusted, refined, and re-applied the AM model, and reported the ongoing results, regarding teacher-candidates (Ralph, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005; Ralph & Yang, 1993), and novice post-secondary instructors (Ralph, 1995; Ralph & Konchak, 1996).

Data collection
During these studies we collected survey data by having each individual first indicate on independent copies of the D-grids, the quadrant in which they felt the protégé was located at that point in time. After each partner independently completed his/her plot-tings, the pair discussed their D choices and rationales.

Next, partners independently marked on their respective A-grid sheets the quadrant in which they thought the mentor was performing with respect to his/her adaptive response in helping the protégé master the competency in question. They subsequently discussed these A-grid markings, as well as the overall similarities and differences between their respective A and D rankings. We collected each pair’s four grid-forms and analyzed the data, in order to determine the degree that mentors synchronized their leadership responses to match the existing task-specific developmental level of their protégés.

Much of our research focused on the mentorship relationship related to teacher candidates’ competencies in classroom management/organization and oral questioning, two skill-sets long considered to be essential to effective teaching that promotes pupils’ learning (Kasin Lemlech, 2010). We then collated all of these data with respect to the total number of individuals whose plot-tings of their own positions and those of their partners matched similar quadrants (e.g., A1 with D1, or A2 with D2, and so on).

The findings revealed that: (1) a mentor who adjusted her/his adaptive response to match the protégé’s changing developmental levels enhanced the protégé’s professional growth in these skills; (2) interpersonal problems typically arose when mismatching of mentor response and protégé development occurred; and (3) these conflicts tended to subside, if this misalignment was corrected by the mentor realigning his/her adaptive response with the corresponding development level of the mentee.

One lingering problem that was identified in our AM research was that even when mentor pairs were acquainted with the model, a small percentage of them still had difficulty in reaching agreement identifying protégés’ actual developmental levels and/or mentors’ matching response level.

To attempt to reduce this mismatching gap, we subsequently made two changes in subsequent mentorship procedures: we increased the length of workshop time devoted to the model, and we made more references to it whenever an opportunity arose to do so during the regular internship activities. These changes appeared to reduce the mismatching gap (Ralph, 2004, 2005).

Discussion
The research results identified AM’s strengths: (1) it helped mentors clarify their conceptualization of the whole mentorship process; (2) it replaced a “one-size-fits-all” approach by allowing mentors to adapt their behaviour according to the developmental needs of their protégés; (3) it was intuitively appealing and relatively easy to learn; (4) it offered mentors a tool to help analyze and alleviate mentoring conflicts; and (5) it revealed that such relationship problems were often the result of mentors mismatching their adaptive responses with protégés’ developmental level.

With respect to the mismatching phenomenon, there was less mismatching regarding the protégés’ D-levels than there was regarding the mentors’ A-responses. A possible reason for this discrepancy was that both sub-groups were typically more familiar with the concepts related to teaching/learning than they were with the relatively new procedures related to AM, with which they had just become acquainted. Hence, participants may have been uncertain about their A-grid rankings.

Furthermore, some protégés ranked them-
Adaptive Mentorship in the Professional Practicum

...selves differently on the D-scale than did their mentors. An explanation for this mismatching aspect may relate to the differences between experts and novices, whereby experts focus more on a sophisticated and holistic picture of the teaching/learning process, while novices tend to be more idealistic, positive, and narrow in their perspective (Shulman, 1987; Veenman, 1984). The issue at the root of this inconsistency is that pairs need to observe the degree of task-specific confidence and competence possessed by the protégé, and that the mentor must reciprocate with inverse proportions of supportive and task response.

Conclusion

The data we have collected to date suggest that the AM model is useful, but that mentors need to be well versed in its application. Future studies could be replicated with mentor/protégé cohorts from other professions using the AM model. We hereby invite interested practitioners and researchers to apply it in their respective mentorship/supervisory settings, record/analyze the results, and disseminate their findings. As a result, the research-base of AM could be expanded, and its potential for enhancing mentorship in all fields could be further developed.

References


**Authors’ Notes**

We thank Dr. Anthony Clarke from the Centre for the Study of Teacher Education at the University of British Columbia, and Brenda Mergel from the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, for their insight and assistance in formatting Figure 1.

**Biographies**

Edwin Ralph is a Professor and Supervisor of Extended-Practicum in the Department of Curriculum Studies in the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. His research and teaching focus on instructional development and mentorship across the professional disciplines.

Keith Walker is a Professor in the Department of Educational Administration, in the College of Education, and the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Saskatchewan. His areas of research and teaching include leadership, mentorship, policy studies, and organizational development.
While there is a wealth of information and resources for new users of classroom response systems, much is yet to be explored, particularly for experienced instructors hoping to leverage this technology further in support of effective learning. In this paper, I highlight recent literature findings, and suggest some areas for future exploration and discussion.

Introduction

Classroom response systems (CRS) or “clickers” are remote-control type devices students use to answer questions posed by the instructor; a computer, receiver, and software capture responses. With these systems, instructors can transform large, impersonal lecture halls into dynamic environments for active learning, instant feedback, and discussion. CRS allow instructors to bridge the physical environment and the virtual, allowing real-time contributions from all students, and providing opportunities for immediate feedback.

Despite initial skepticism among science educators, CRS are gaining more acceptance as tools to support learning. In fact, until five years ago, I was doubtful that the addition of yet another technology to my classroom would be beneficial. However, having read some compelling reports (Beatty, 2004; Wood, 2004), I carried out a pilot study in a large (> 90 student) microbiology course. Like many adopters, I was struck by the change in classroom dynamic, and student feedback was very positive. I wasn’t alone; my observations mirrored what other implementers were reporting (e.g., Crossgrove & Curran, 2008; Preszler, Dawe, Shuster, & Shuster, 2007).

In the past few years, I have attended several (and delivered some) of the many workshops/seminars aimed at individuals considering use of CRS. There have been a wealth of such introductory (“Clicker 101”) sessions offered at various educational conferences, as well as teaching and learning support centres at universities. Similarly, there is a growing body of resources for individuals seeking general guidelines (see the CWSEI/CU-SEI, Clicker Resource Guide, 2009; Duncan, 2005), and best practices (e.g., Caldwell, 2007); reports recounting individual experiences in different science classes abound. However,
there are fewer resources available for experienced CRS users seeking to extend use of this technology. In this paper, I have highlighted some of the resources available in science education literature, as well as directions for further exploration.

What Do We Know?

Many potentially helpful anecdotal reports are available for instructors preparing to use clickers in the science classroom, and want to know what to expect. The value of using CRS to foster improvement in student performance is also something many instructors wonder about. A number of papers indicate benefits in terms of improved attendance and engagement (see Crossgrove & Curran, 2008; Gauci, Dantas, Williams, & Kemm, 2009; Preszler et al., 2007). Unsurprisingly, given the difficulties inherent with implementing comparative studies, there is less evidence showing clear benefit in learning outcomes. (Indeed, there is considerable discussion among educators in terms of how to best measure that learning has occurred!) Comparative studies can prove challenging in terms of ethically including appropriate controls, and controlling variables. Among comprehensive studies of CRS, some have demonstrated significant improvement in learning outcomes (Freeman et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 2009). These studies, and others (Morling, McAuliffe, Cohen, & DiLorenzo, 2008), have demonstrated increases in student grades with clicker use.

While Morling et al. (2008) has been cited (e.g., Campbell & Mayer, 2008; Morgan, 2008) as an example of increased grades in association with CRS use, the study reports that clicker use in the study group was rare/minimal. In fact, the authors note that they deliberately avoided using clickers with known pedagogical strategies, and specifically mention that future studies could investigate the incorporation of CRS with such strategies. Viewing CRS as a tool, akin to a computer, presentation software, or learning management system, I find it difficult to envision how clickers could affect student learning in a meaningful way without being used with established teaching methods. Indeed, other educators indicate CRS are tools best used in support of known strategies that facilitate student learning, such as peer teaching (Mazur, 1997). Beatty and Gerace (2009) state: “don’t ask what the learning gain from CRS use is; ask what pedagogical approaches a CRS can aid or enable or magnify, and what the learning impacts of those various approaches are” (p. 147).

Some studies do clearly indicate pedagogical approaches that can be used with clickers. For example, CRS are well suited to support question-driven activities, known to support high-quality learning. Beatty, Gerace, Leonar, and Dufresne (2006) provide guidelines in setting goals for questions – each question should have a clear pedagogic purpose for content, process, and metacognition. While their examples are rooted in physics, I find the guidelines extremely helpful in constructing biology questions. Examples of CRS questions, as well as practical suggestions, are also available from other sources (e.g. Duncan, 2005).

Dangel and Wang (2008) discuss the use of CRS in supporting effective teaching practices and promoting deep (vs. surface) learning. They note that clickers are commonly used to support only a few of the “principles for good practice” in teaching described by Chickering and Gamson (1987), such as an emphasis on time-on-task, prompt feedback, and facilitating student-instructor contact. Similarly, CRS were primarily used to target lower cognitive levels (per Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, revised from Bloom, 1956). In some cases, CRS were reported as supporting other principles of good practice (i.e., to develop student cooperation and active learning, and to communicate high expectations). It appears possible to use clickers to support all the principles for good practice, and address higher-order cognitive skills.

It is apparent that an instructor seeking a magic bullet to improve student performance is likely to be disappointed. There is evidence that CRS support good teaching/learning approaches, but as with any tool, benefits can be expected only when the system is used thoughtfully and aligned with the pedagogical strategy chosen by the instructor.
Where Are We Going?

From my own experience, what has been reported in the literature, and discussions with other instructors, there are several areas where further study/communication would be beneficial. I’ve described some below, but this is not an exhaustive list – many avenues for exploration and future studies exist!

Question construction, use, sharing

Beatty et al. (2006) and others (Nicol 2007; Palmer & Devitt 2007) have provided guidelines for the development of multiple-choice questions that promote effective, higher-order learning. Referencing Bloom’s Taxonomy, a significant number of multiple-choice questions in the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) assess higher-order thinking skills (Zheng, Lawhorn, Lumley, & Freeman 2008). This supports the observation by Dangel and Wang (2008), suggesting that there is potential for increased use of CRS to foster higher-order thinking skills.

Although students enjoy in-class demonstrations, Crouch, Fagen, Callan, and Mazur (2004) have shown that meaningful learning does not typically occur just by viewing such demonstrations. However, if students are asked to predict the outcome of the demonstration, learning increases; clickers can be used to poll student predictions ahead of a demonstration, and used in an instructor-defined framework for post-demonstration reflection and discussions. Shared examples of useful experiments that have accompanying annotations to help instructors to use such activities in classes would likely be well received in most scientific disciplines.

Specific guidelines for using/developing clicker questions in support of peer instruction, case studies, and problem-based-learning activities would be welcomed, particularly for instructors of large classes who may be daunted by the idea of facilitating these activities without supporting technology.

Currently, some publishers make questions available to adopters of certain textbooks, but quality of such question banks is variable. (Test banks for multiple-choice exams exist, but also vary in quality, and not all of these questions are best used as in-class clicker questions.) Tested, annotated banks of clicker questions for various scientific disciplines and topics would be welcomed.

Quality of learning, metacognition

CRS may prove valuable in metacognitive exercises, helping students develop awareness of their own learning. Crowe, Dirks, and Wenderoth (2008) describe successful attempts to bring such metacognition into the classroom. These authors developed an assessment tool, which both students and faculty could use to evaluate biology questions according to Bloom’s Taxonomy levels. Students examine what questions are asking for: knowledge, comprehension, application, etc. Improvements in student study skills and metacognition were observed when students were trained in, and used, the assessment tool. Wider use of this tool, or other metacognitive exercises tied to clicker questions could promote higher quality learning.

The SOLO Taxonomy is another framework for evaluating the quality of learning and progression towards mastery of a discipline (Biggs & Collis, 1982). Students can be encouraged to move towards deeper learning and develop associated study practices (Biggs, 2001). I believe that we have an opportunity to encourage students to assess their own levels of mastery and awareness of study practices via CRS, similar to the “Blooming Biology” tool described by Crowe et al. (2008). (Annotating clicker questions with the Bloom’s Taxonomy and/or SOLO Taxonomy levels targeted would be useful for instructors using discipline-specific question banks.)

Concept inventories

Concept inventories are collections of multiple-choice questions designed to determine students’ conceptual understanding in a particular field. Questions deal with core concepts and distractors reflect common student misconceptions. The Force Concept Inventory’s (Hestenes, Wells, & Swackhamer, 1992) success in provoking reform in physics education has prompted development of other concept inventories. The relationship between CRS and concept inventories is two-fold. Questions from concept
inventories delivered through CRS could be helpful for instructors to monitor student conceptual learning in class. CRS can also be used to help identify troublesome concepts and common misconceptions, which could then be used in the development, or refinement, of concept inventories. (Item analyses will highlight good vs. poor distractors.)

Emerging uses of clickers…and potential issues
Several intriguing aspects of advanced CRS use have been suggested, but are not well-studied:

1. CRS could be used to identify at-risk students, simply based upon late clicker registration (not simply attendance, nor poor scores on clicker questions), allowing instructor intervention at relatively early stages in a course (Griff & Matter, 2008). Other strategies for identification of at-risk students are possible, based on student responses/scores, but we await further studies on such methods to speculate on the best strategy.

2. Can CRS affect student retention? The shift in classroom activities and atmosphere due to CRS use could counter some of the traditional issues students perceive with science courses, leading to attrition (Seymour & Hewitt 1997; Tobias 1990). Caldwell (2007) reports a decrease in attrition during a course, but it would be interesting to know if CRS may contribute to retention in the longer term.

3. Use of clickers in class could provide opportunities for students with disabilities to comfortably participate in discussion activities, as peer anonymity may encourage more authentic sharing (N. Israelite, personal communication, 2007). There is also a need to explore potential issues faced by students with disabilities; strategies and possible accommodations should be developed and disseminated so that all students can benefit from the pedagogical strategies supported by CRS.

4. CRS allow data collection in ways that had not been easily possible in a classroom setting until recently. Reports can be generated for various purposes (e.g., student scores, question item analysis). Software varies between different vendors of CRS, so accessing and compiling these data differ by product. Some standardization of data files/reports and clear guidelines for analysis of CRS data could allow individual instructors to leverage collected data in many ways (e.g., improving clicker questions, tracking trends across different academic sessions, etc.) and provide opportunities for aggregation of data beyond the individual course/instructor.

5. A concern highlighted by the participants of the Clickers 201 STLHE 2009 session relates to privacy and ethics of CRS use. As mentioned, rapid and copious data collection is possible, and instructors can link responses to individual students (unless “anonymous” mode is selected in the software, or students exchange clickers temporarily). Public awareness of privacy rights, along with increasing use of CRS, may necessitate clear guidelines regarding data collection and privacy.

Conclusion

It is an exciting time to be using classroom response systems in undergraduate science education. While a body of literature and many introductory resources exist for new users of CRS, additional information and support for experienced CRS users would be enthusiastically welcomed. The nature of CRS as a tool to support effective pedagogical strategies (as opposed to use of clickers just to bring another technology into the room) has not been widely disseminated, yet is important in understanding key benefits and limitations of the technology. Some potential areas for further exploration include sharing of field-tested clicker question banks, integration of SOLO taxonomy levels in question design/implementation, and the use of CRS in development of concept inventories. As we move forward with this technology, however, we must keep in mind that considerations surrounding accessibility, privacy, and data collec-
Classroom Response Systems in Science Courses

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**Biography**

Tanya Noel is an Associate Lecturer in the Biology Department and a CST Scholar working with the Centre for the Support of Teaching at York University. Interests include understanding/improving quality of learning in science courses, particularly at the first-year level.
Qui a Peur d’une Pédagogie Différentielle des Sexes?

Claude Lamontagne
Université d’Ottawa

Butterfly: … Vogliatemi bene (Désire-moi bien)…
Pinkerton: … Sei mia (Sois mienne).
Butterfly: Sì, per la vita (Oui, pour la vie).

Pucini’s Madama Butterfly
L. Illica & G. Giacosa

Je tente ici de faire valoir le point de vue selon lequel il demeure pertinent, contrairement à ce que la rectitude politique me semble vouloir prêcher, de s’interroger sur les possibles différences entre les hommes et les femmes en ce qui a trait aux aspects de la dynamique psychique que la problématique pédagogique interpelle. Je fais d’abord remarquer que je n’ai pu trouver aucune « théorie scientifique » s’y rapportant dans les sciences humaines prétendant s’y intéresser. Je propose ensuite une amorce de traitement théorique de la problématique, que je pousse jusqu’à l’opérationnalisation, puis à un premier test empirique, qui m’apparaît concluant quant à l’intérêt de poursuivre la lancée. En conclusion, je lance quelques pistes de réflexions sur les implications de ma théorie relatives à la pratique pédagogique.

Introduction

La question des spécificités respectives de la féminité et de la masculinité ainsi que celle des rapports que ces traits peuvent entretenir dans la dynamique psychique humaine remontent sans doute à l’aurore de l’humanité. On pourrait penser qu’avec l’arrivée de la science empirique moderne et son institutionnalisation à partir du 19ième siècle, un éventail de théories testables empiriquement s’est progressivement déployé. Eh bien non! Si l’encre a effectivement coulé à flot sur le sujet,
mes tentatives de trouver ne serait-ce qu’une seule théorie empiriquement testable se sont soldées, aussi surprenant que cela puisse paraître, par un échec total. Par « théorie empiriquement testable », j’entends ici « un complexe conceptuel cohérent expliquant de façon causale un ensemble de manifestations observables, et ce, de façon réfutable » (conformément à la tradition des sciences naturelles, telle que Bachelard [1940] et Popper [1979] en font le procès épistémologique).

Si, pour les traitements théoriques de nature psychanalytique par exemple, la nature irréfutable (c.-à-d. empiriquement non testable) des propositions est largement acceptée, pour les traitements de nature psychométrique, qui constituent l’essentiel des contributions plus récentes, l’aura de scientificité émanant de la nature quantitative de l’approche rend la question plus délicate. Le fait est, à mon sens, que la tradition psychométrique semble croire que l’élaboration de théorie doive attendre une sorte de certitude factorielle… qui semble bien loin de vouloir se manifester (voir par exemple Choi & Fuqua, 2003). S’il y a bien de multiples facteurs quantifiés, il n’y a pas (encore) plus de théorie empiriquement testable (tel que défini plus haut) dans les études psychométriques sur la féminité et la masculinité qu’il n’y en a dans les études psychanalytiques.

Par ailleurs, et c’est là que le thème de la 29ième conférence de la SAPES à Frédéricton prend toute sa pertinence, cette absence de théorie se double, lorsqu’on regarde du côté des sciences humaines appliquées, d’une absence tout aussi surprenante de préoccupation pour la question des incidences appliquées d’une possible variété de dispositions critiques spécifiques à la féminité d’une part, et à la masculinité d’autre part. Qu’il y ait dilemme fondamental ici ne fait à mon sens aucun doute: si à Saint John, comme le font remarquer les organisateurs de la conférence, « la force de la marée est telle qu’elle arrive à renverser le cours d’une chute d’eau », n’est-il pas encore plus ahurissant de remarquer qu’à travers tout l’Occident industrialisé la force de la rectitude politique est telle qu’elle arrive à renverser, sans aucune théorie scientifique à l’appui, la direction du courant de sens commun selon lequel la féminité et la masculinité diffèrent profondément et que cela ne peut pas ne pas avoir une incidence sur la pratique pédagogique! Avec une expérience de 34 ans d’enseignement universitaire en psychologie (une discipline qui est passée d’une proportion dominante d’étudiants à une proportion dominante d’étudiantes en cours de route, me donnant une expérience significative d’enseignement aux deux sexes), il me semble absolument évident que la variable sexuelle (dans ces prolongements psychiques que rejoignent les concepts de féminité et de masculinité) joue un rôle déterminant dans quantité d’aspects-clés de la dynamique pédagogique universitaire.

C’est cette conviction qui m’a amené à tenir de formuler une première théorie empiriquement testable des spécificités respectives des dynamiques psychiques féminine et masculine.

Une Théorie des Spécificités Respectives des Dynamiques Psychiques Féminine et Masculine

La théorie

Les concepts de « féminité » et de « masculinité » que la théorie tente de définir doivent être compris comme composantes complémentaires de la dynamique psychique naturelle (ou innée) de tout individu, homme ou femme. Il n’est pas question ici de « traits » acquis (rôles sexuels, etc.). « Féminité » et « masculinité » sont posés comme pendants psychiques fondamentaux de la dualité biologique fondamentale mâle/femelle. Le couple conceptuel « féminité/masculinité » proposé s’apparente donc au couple « yin/yang » de la philosophie chinoise, ou au couple « animus/anima » de la psychologie jungienne. La théorie propose d’articuler le rapport de complémentarité du couple « féminité/masculinité » sur une seule dimension bipolaire, avec, à un pôle, un rapport de 0% de féminité et 100% de masculinité (0%F/100%M), et à l’autre pôle, l’inverse (100%F/0%M). Chaque individu se situerait quelque part sur le continuum s’étalant d’un pôle à l’autre. Par ailleurs, si la théorie permet qu’un individu, homme ou femme, puisse se situer n’importe où sur le continuum, elle pose qu’au niveau des populations, les femmes auront en moyenne une fé-
mimité significativement plus élevée que les hommes, et, inversement et conséquemment, les hommes auront en moyenne une masculinité significativement plus élevée que les femmes (justifiant ainsi le choix des termes « féminité » et « masculinité »).

Les concepts de « féminité » et de « masculinité » proposés trouvent leur sens ultime dans le concept d’intentionnalité, un terme emprunté par Franz Brentano aux scolastiques du Moyen Âge pour établir les fondements de la psychologie comme science empirique (Brentano, 1874, 1944). Ce que fait remarquer Brentano, c’est que contrairement, par exemple, à l’événement physique, qui ne concerne que l’objet, l’événement psychique est toujours « tension » entre le sujet (l’instance « expériençante ») et l’objet (l’instance « expériencée »). Il appelle cette tension « intentionnalité ». La manière la plus efficace d’illustrer ce concept difficile est peut-être de faire appel au phylactère, cette « bulle » qui, particulièrement sous sa forme de petit nuage, permet au bédéiste d’illustrer ce que le personnage a à l’esprit. Le phylactère et son contenu sont deux entités bien distinctes, qui, seulement lorsqu’elles sont combinées (mises en tension), permettent de représenter l’événement psychique. C’est cette combinaison (mise en tension) de la « présence psychique » (le phylactère, le sujet, le Ce-qui-est-Soi) et de ce à quoi la présence psychique est présente (le contenu du phylactère, l’objet, le Ce-qui-est-Autre) que Brentano appelle l’intentionnalité. La théorie proposée ici inscrit cette dualité psychique fondamentale, cette intentionnalité, comme enjeu d’une pulsion psychique tout aussi fondamentale, qui pousse à réduire la dualité en question à une réalité unique et indivisible (incarnant peut-être ainsi le grand rêve moniste). Cela ouvre sur deux stratégies bien distinctes, les deux seules possibles me semble-t-il : ou bien le Ce-qui-est-Soi cherche à intégrer, à comprendre, le Ce-qui-est-Autre, stratégie que la théorie proposée attribue en propre à la masculinité, ou bien le Ce-qui-est-Soi cherche à être intégré, être com-pris, par le Ce-qui-est-Autre, stratégie que la théorie proposée attribue en propre à la féminité. La masculinité, qui vise l’objet intentionnel dans son « objectalité », sera dite « objectotropique », et la féminité, qui vise l’objet intentionnel dans sa « subjectalité », sera dite « subjectotropique ».

**Première opérationnalisation et mise à l’épreuve empirique de la théorie**

Le premier secteur d’expression humaine choisi pour mettre la théorie à l’épreuve empiriquement a été celui de la relation amoureuse dans sa dimension sensuelle. L’« objectotropie » masculine y devient quête d’un objet, objet dont l’agent de la quête sera le sujet privilégié, quête, donc, d’un être aimé (la « bien-aimée » du discours romantique?), et la « subjectotropie » féminine y devient quête d’un sujet, sujet dont l’agent de la quête deviendra l’objet privilégié, quête, donc, d’un être aimant (l’« amant » du discours romantique?). Bref, la masculinité cherchera à aimer, à prendre, et la féminité cherchera à être aimée, à être prise. Pour mettre cette implication théorique à l’épreuve, j’ai construit un site internet permettant à des sujets de rédiger un bref paragraphe décrivant un phantasme sensuel évoqué en s’imaginant une première rencontre intime avec le ou la partenaire idéal(e), utilisant le plus possible des termes tels que regard, regarder, caresser, caresser, toucher, embrasser, baiser, etc. Le paragraphe pouvait ensuite être soumis automatiquement, dans l’anonymat (les sujets ne devant fournir que leur âge et leur sexe), auquel cas il était ajouté à ma banque de données. J’ai ainsi pu obtenir 100 paragraphes originaux, 50 rédigés par des hommes et 50 par des femmes. Quatre juges ont été formés à faire, à l’aveugle (c.-à-d. sans contacts entre eux), le décompte des formules « objectotropiques » (indiquant vouloir prendre, par exemple « …je rêve de ton corps depuis si longtemps ») et des formules « subjectotropiques » (indiquant vouloir être prise, par exemple « …je rêve de tes mains sur mon corps ») pour chaque paragraphe (édité au préalable pour éliminer tout indice quant au sexe de l’auteur). Le score attribué à chaque paragraphe prenait ainsi la forme d’une paire de nombres Nf-Nm (Nf étant le nombre d’expressions subjectotropiques, ou féminines, dans le paragraphe, et Nm étant le nombre d’expressions objectotropiques, ou masculines). Les corrélations entre les scores attribués par les quatre juges pris deux à deux se sont toutes avérées égales ou supérieures à 0,9.

Les scores moyens accordés par les quatre juges aux paragraphes rédigés par des hommes, et ceux ac-
cordés aux paragraphes rédigés par des femmes, sont présentés à la Figure 1.1 Chaque score Nf-Nm a été transformé en pourcentage ( Nf/[Nf+Nm] lorsqu’exprimé en termes de féminité, et Nm/[Nf+Nm] lorsqu’exprimé en termes de masculinité ). Ainsi, un paragraphe qui aurait reçu un score de 6-2 (6 expressions féminines et 2 expressions masculines), devient un score de 75% lorsqu’exprimé en termes de féminité, et un score de 25% lorsqu’exprimé en termes de masculinité.

Comme il s’agit d’une toute première mise à l’épreuve empirique, beaucoup de prudence est évidemment de mise en matière de généralisation au-delà de l’échantillon. Si nous nous en tenons à l’échantillon, la différence homme-femme en matière de masculinité-féminité saute aux yeux. Si j’enseignais à deux groupes dont le premier correspond à mon échantillon d’hommes d’une part et dont le second correspond à mon échantillon de femmes d’autre part, n’aurais-je pas raison de me demander comment cette différence peut jouer sur le rapport pédagogique que je veux établir?

Figure 1
Scores bruts de féminité/masculinité de 47 femmes et 49 hommes

1 Un (1) paragraphe chez les hommes et trois (3) paragraphes chez les femmes ont été jugés par les quatre juges comme ne contenant aucune expression objectotropique ou subjectotropique. Ces paragraphes ont été retirés des échantillons, c’est pourquoi la Figure 1 n’illustré que les scores de 47 paragraphes de femmes et 49 paragraphes d’hommes.
Qui a Peur d’une Pédagogie Différentielle des Sexes?

Il peut paraître excessif de tenter ici de prétendre que les différences marquées observées dans l’échantillon analysé en matière d’objectotropie et de subjectotropie amoureuses ont quelque pertinence dans la problématique pédagogique, ne serait-ce que pour l’échantillon lui-même. Pour comprendre comment cela n’a rien d’excessif, comment au contraire cela est plein de bon sens, il faut simplement se rendre à l’évidence que ce qui est vrai de la dynamique amoureuse ne peut pas ne pas avoir d’incidence sur la dynamique affective en général, que ce qui a une incidence sur la dynamique effective en général ne peut pas ne pas avoir d’incidence sur la dynamique motivationnelle, et que la dynamique motivationnelle constitue une dimension clé de la problématique pédagogique.

Mais comment, vous demandez-vous peut-être, cette portée de la théorie sur la dimension motivationnelle de la problématique pédagogique peut-elle donner lieu à des améliorations concrètes, sous forme de stratégies pratiques en milieu d’enseignement et d’apprentissage? Comment inscrire la poursuite des objectifs didactiques dans des contextes motivationnels qui respectent la possible dominante en objectotropie, ou en objectotropie du groupe-classe, ou celle de quelque sous-groupe du groupe-classe rencontré à l’occasion, ou encore celle des individus rencontrés lors des périodes d’encadrement individualisé? Cela ne pourrait-il pas se faire, entre autres, en choisissant des exemples dont l’intérêt rejoint plus puissamment la tendance objectotropique que la tendance subjectotropique, ou l’inverse, selon le cas? Rappelons que la subjectotropie réside essentiellement dans un intérêt, de la part de l’agent subjetotropique, pour les objets de conscience qui sont capables d’une « subjectalité » comprenant cet agent subjetotropique comme objet. Le plus évident de ces objets est bien évidemment « l’autre », « l’autre » en tant que sujet, est-il important de préciser. Car « l’autre » peut aussi être pris comme objet cible de l’objectotropie, qui réside essentiellement dans un intérêt, de la part de l’agent objectotropique, pour les objets de conscience en tant qu’objets, indépendamment de leur possible « subjectalité ». Un choix de contextes significants pour aborder une notion au programme ne pourrait-il pas, devant un groupe à féminité dominante, aller du côté de problématiques inscrivant la notion dans un contexte plus riche en « subjectalité », et, devant un groupe à masculinité dominante, aller du côté de problématiques inscrivant la notion dans un contexte plus riche en « objectalité »? Un cours de statistique en psychologie, par exemple, ne serait-il pas plus mobilisant pour un esprit à tendance subjectotropique s’il abordait les notions ciblées en prenant des données relatives à comment l’esprit humain attribue des traits de personnalité aux autres, que s’il abordait les notions ciblées en prenant des données relatives à des expériences de laboratoire sur la psychophysique de la perception des couleurs?

Évidemment, toutes les disciplines ne se prêtent pas aussi facilement à ce petit jeu, et certaines disciplines peuvent même ne pas se prêter du tout à cette variation contextuelle respectueuse des spécificités motivationnelles associées à la féminité et à la masculinité. Mais cela n’implique-t-il pas, du même coup, la possibilité que les disciplines en tant que telles ne soient pas toutes aussi attrayantes l’une que l’autre pour la féminité et pour la masculinité, contrairement à ce que la rectitude politique tente de nous laisser croire?

Références


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2 « … autrui, c’est l’autre, c’est-à-dire le moi qui n’est pas moi... » (Sartre, 1943, p. 285).


**Biographie**

Claude Lamontagne est professeur agrégé à l’École de psychologie de l’Université d’Ottawa. Détenteur d’un Ph.D. en informatique et intelligence artificielle de l’Université d’Édimbourg (Écosse, RU), ses intérêts de recherche gravitent autour de questions relatives à la modélisation computationnelle des processus cognitifs, leur mise en contexte épistémologique, et leurs implications psychopédagogiques. Il a reçu en 2003 le Prix national 3M d’excellence en enseignement.
Responding to the Challenging Dilemma of Faculty Engagement in Research on Teaching and Learning and Disciplinary Research

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Over the past two decades, the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) has received increased attention in academe. Broadly conceptualized as an area which combines the experience of teaching with the scholarship of research, and the dissemination of this knowledge such that the broader academic community can benefit from this scholarly product, SoTL has been regarded as a primary means to increase the quality and value of teaching in higher education. This paper explores five challenges which contribute to the dilemma of faculty engagement in research on teaching and learning: limited expertise, the graduate studies culture, terminology (SoTL is widely misunderstood), reward and recognition, and time constraints. Responses to these challenges are presented in hopes of contributing to a positive dialogue for change, where faculty engagement in research on teaching and learning not only continues to grow, but becomes firmly grounded as an essential scholarly activity within higher education.

Why the Dilemma?

Research is essential to academe – it drives knowledge and represents the basis upon which innovation and change depend. Faculty are motivated by the prospects of exploring existing knowledge gaps within their field of study, through the application of acceptable and appropriate methods of data collection and analysis. Their career is inherently dependent upon the peer-review process, where academic research is reviewed, revised, and published to provide new and improved insights that are shared to provide disciplinary advancement. One’s scholarly publication record has remained one of the primary bases upon which the faculty tenure and promotion process depends.
There is little doubt in our minds that most faculty members are deeply committed to their teaching practice. When we engage in discussions with faculty, many express an interest in pursuing the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) to enhance student learning, to actively demonstrate their commitment to teaching, and to broadly support improved teaching and learning in higher education. In a survey of over 100 medical faculty members, Zibrowski, Weston, and Goldszmidt (2008) found that an overwhelming majority (79%) expressed an interest in engaging in educational scholarship. However, faculty often express concerns regarding their ability to actively engage in research on teaching and learning, while maintaining momentum on their disciplinary research agenda, and committing to their many other academic and service-based responsibilities. Based upon our previous academic experiences and a review of scholarly literature, we summarize and respond to five challenges to faculty engagement in research on teaching and learning in the following sections: limited expertise, the graduate studies culture, terminology (SoTL is widely misunderstood), reward and recognition, and time constraints.

Limited expertise

Because many faculty lack a background in educational research, they feel as though they have limited expertise to effectively engage in research on teaching and learning (Goldszmidt, Zimbrowski, & Weston, 2008; McKinney, 2007; Zibrowski et al., 2008). To this point, we paraphrase the thoughts of a recent participant in the Engaging in Educational Research learning circle at our institution: “I feel very comfortable doing social science research, but I find research on teaching and learning very difficult.” Although comfortable within their ‘home’ discipline, faculty often find the breadth of literature in higher education decidedly overwhelming. In her book Enhancing Learning through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, McKinney (2007) identifies in excess of 100 journals related to teaching and learning in higher education. Furthermore, given the complexity of teaching and learning issues within academe, defining a specific research problem can be extraordinarily daunting, let alone applying valid and reliable research methods to conduct SoTL (research methods which are often clearly outside of their disciplinary expertise).

According to Goldszmidt et al. (2008), providing additional formal education may not be the answer to this challenge. They assessed the impact of an initiative where medical faculty members were sponsored by their college to complete a Master of Education. When compared with faculty who had not participated in this advanced degree program, they found that it did not result in an increase in the faculty members’ level of interest or active participation in education-related research projects, funding attempts, or publications. In addition, there was no significant difference in the faculty members’ perceived barriers to or support needs for encouraging their participation in educational research. Furthermore, it has been suggested that faculty with an education-related background are more likely to be appointed additional administrative and leadership roles, thereby further confounding their ability to conduct research on teaching and learning (Zibrowski et al., 2008).

Internal faculty development initiatives such as teaching scholars programs (e.g. Gruppen, Frohna, Anderson, & Lowe, 2003; Steinert, Nasmith, McLeod, & Conochie, 2003) and faculty certificate programs (e.g. Hubball & Burt, 2006; Hubball & Poole, 2003) appear to better meet the needs of faculty. These programs intentionally bring together small cohorts of faculty to explore the theories and principles of educational scholarship, actively evaluate and improve their teaching practice, and foster engagement in research on teaching and learning. Many are based upon the premise of providing an opportunity for interaction through a learning community, where faculty meet intentionally and regularly to actively dialogue and provide a sense of reciprocal support and mentorship (Blanton & Stylianou, 2009; Hubball & Albon, 2007; Richlin & Cox, 2004). One of the inherent strengths of this approach is the natural collaboration that evolves between new and experienced faculty members, motivated by the common goal of improving teaching and learning in higher education.
The graduate studies culture
Most faculty members receive very little exposure to pedagogy during their graduate studies. Kreber (2001) argues that graduate education should place an increased focus on SoTL by incorporating pedagogy courses into disciplinary curricula, encouraging manuscripts and dissertations with a focus on disciplinary pedagogical issues, formally integrating educational theory and research into graduate teaching assistant training programs, and establishing a mentorship model between graduate students and faculty members who are actively engaged in research on teaching and learning.

Momentum for enhancing the quality of pedagogical development in graduate student education has received recent attention as the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies has identified Teaching Competence as a core professional skill development area for all Canadian graduate students (CAGS, 2008). Although much focus has been placed on the role of teaching centres in providing teaching training and skill development, a concerted effort must be made to integrate pedagogical development and a scholarly teaching and learning research agenda throughout the university community, especially at the department and college levels. Here, faculty could collaborate with graduate students to share both their academic and teaching experiences, through an intentionally developed research program that actively demonstrates how research on teaching and learning can be applied to successfully support the mobilization and translation of disciplinary knowledge and expertise.

Terminology: SoTL is widely misunderstood
Many faculty are unfamiliar with the term SoTL, which is often widely misunderstood: “Using SoTL as a noun, other times as a verb or touting it as a synonym for other phenomena, is a manifestation of deeper conceptual problems within higher education. At a most basic level, attempts to delineate dimensions of SoTL too often deploy piffling or weak understandings of scholarship” (Boshier, 2009, p. 4). Boshier further notes that institutional attempts to define and operationalize SoTL can have unintentionally negative consequences, when tenure and promotion candidates are forced to justify and provide evidence of how their research qualifies, in accordance with a harshly pre-defined and linear SoTL framework. Akin to one’s disciplinary research, we would argue that there is no linear set of established criteria for conducting SoTL research; it should rather be viewed as a ‘dynamic and iterative process’ of discovery (Boshier, 2009). Akerlind’s (2003) categories for teaching development provide an appropriate context for the intricate nature of SoTL where, “a broader understanding of teaching may precede a broader understanding of growth and development of a teacher” (p. 389). There is no one agreed upon definition of SoTL, but Prosser (2008) summarizes by stating that SoTL is improving students’ learning using evidence-based approaches.

Innovation is the foundation of discovery – perhaps our attempts to define and operationalize SoTL based on a linear set of criteria have worked against the inspired sense of innovation we hope to see in higher education. We can only begin to imagine the teaching and learning innovations if faculty were inspired to apply creative disciplinary research approaches to explore the intricacies of teaching and learning in higher education.

Research on teaching and learning is not adequately recognized or rewarded
The seemingly insurmountable challenge that SoTL faces is firmly grounded in the historical professorial model of Research, Teaching, and Service that has resulted in a “conceptual isolation of teaching from the primary scholarly work of the disciplines” (Weston & McAlpine, 2001, p. 90). In comparison to traditional disciplinary research activities, research on teaching and learning is often not recognized or rewarded as quality research. It may be viewed with cynicism by departments and colleagues, as questions of internal and external validity arise. Tangible research outcomes such as scholarly publications and presentations may not be given due credit by tenure and promotion committees. Furthermore, if research on teaching and learning is relegated to a teaching activity and a faculty member is not engaged in a defined
teaching-stream, individual departments and committees are posed with the fundamental challenge of how to equitably evaluate these activities based upon a limited set of criteria. Although the tenure and promotion process varies greatly between departments and institutions, faculty are likely to achieve greater recognition and reward for their disciplinary research, and therefore, are less motivated to engage in educational research.

Can the disciplinary research process lend itself to research on teaching and learning? Evers, Rush, and Berdrow (1998) developed a model of workplace skills called *The Bases of Competence* that includes four groupings (bases) of four or five skills each. The research that led to this model was disciplinarily-based in business and sociology, but led to enhancements in undergraduate education in terms of the skills needed to survive and thrive in today’s workplace. This is but one faculty member’s experience in research that lends itself well to Weston and McAlpine’s (2001) notion of a, “continuum of growth toward the scholarship of teaching” (p. 91), which considers teaching in integration *with* rather than isolation *from* one’s disciplinary research.

We would argue that the acts of teaching and learning are essential to the translation and mobilization of disciplinary knowledge and expertise, and thereby imperative to the discipline. If we are to commit to improving the quality of higher education and to a continuous cycle of research, discovery, and innovation within the disciplines, we must also commit to establishing a scholarly community of research on teaching and learning across the academy. Interest in SoTL is increasing, and many Canadian institutions have taken a lead in establishing funding and grant programs, departmental and institutional awards, faculty certification programs, teaching conferences, scholarly publications, and improvements to the tenure and promotion process – all dedicated to recognizing and rewarding faculty engagement in research on teaching and learning (Christensen Hughes, 2006; Poole, Taylor, & Thompson, 2007), “to help orchestrate, support, and communicate the processes and products of SoTL more broadly” (Poole et al., 2007, p. 12).

**Time constraints**

Time constraints are one of the most substantial barriers to faculty engagement in scholarly activities related to teaching and learning (Goldszmidt et al., 2008; McKinney, 2007; Zimbrowski et al., 2008). Time-related barriers are complex and often intricately associated with the above four challenges as faculty express frustration over their inability to effectively dedicate time to SoTL projects, report having difficulty juggling their multiple academic, teaching, and administrative responsibilities, and lack motivation for engaging in research on teaching and learning because these activities receive very little support and recognition from their departments and colleagues (Zimbrowski et al., 2008). Faculty often feel as though SoTL is simply an add-on to their already heavy academic workloads.

In order to address this challenge, research on teaching and learning must be established as an institutional priority, both to improve the quality and value of higher education and to promote the dissemination and mobilization of disciplinary knowledge and expertise. We must engage in a quality SoTL dialogue across the institution and commit to improvement based upon the very foundations of higher education – reliable and valid research. Both financial and institutional support are critical to the success of these programs, in terms of establishing interdisciplinary funding for program development, administration, and operation, devoting release-time to encourage faculty participation in pedagogical research initiatives, and providing research support grants.
Conclusion

We fully recognize that there is no one solution to the challenging dilemma of faculty engagement in research on teaching and learning and disciplinary research. We must collaborate to promote SoTL, and to establish a diverse range of innovative programs to encourage research on teaching and learning. As an academic community, we can take three proactive measures to support faculty engagement in research on teaching and learning: provide research support, encourage colleague interactions, and provide on-going pedagogical development opportunities. We hope that this essay will contribute to a progressive dialogue that alleviates some of the institutional challenges to faculty engagement in educational scholarship.

References


**Biographies**

Natasha Kenny is an Educational Developer in Teaching Support Services at the University of Guelph. She has an interdisciplinary background in educational development, environmental science, and landscape architecture. Her current scholarly interests relate to enhancing faculty and graduate student pedagogical development through the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Frederick Evers is the Director of Teaching Support Services and a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph. His current scholarly interests relate to student transition from school to work and faculty engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning.
John: When I write a poem I’m doing research (Day & Guiney Yallop, 2009; Guiney Yallop, 2009, 2008, 2005) and when I’m doing research it usually results in a poem. The poems written and shared during this study are evocative. They bring us into experiences. They reveal identities – sometimes painfully, sometimes joyfully, always with an openness to human experience.

Opening

The subtitle for this paper comes from Carl Leggo (e-mail communication) in response to our chapbook (Guiney Yallop, Naylor, Sharif, & Taylor, 2009).

Note: A chapbook of poetry is a non-periodical collection of poetry in print that does not have the required number of pages for a book.
We chose different sites throughout our university and its surrounding communities in which to write because, in addition to exploring our identities and our relationships with our communities, we also wanted to explore the effect of place on our writing. Our writing was therapeutic; we make no apologies for research that is healing. We celebrate research that gives something to participants.

Sections from my doctoral dissertation (Guiney Yallop, 2008) constituted our reading for the first session where we discussed poetic inquiry and wrote in response to the question Who am I?

Who are we? We are man and woman. We are minority – visible and invisible; we are majority. We are young and we are old. We are parent, partner, daughter, son, uncle, aunt, sister, brother, and friend. We are educator and student. We are participant and researcher. We are individual and we are community.

Cornelia Hoogland’s (2005) award-winning chapbook, Second Marriage, was read in preparation for our second session where we talked and wrote about our theme of “relationships.” Our identities are connected to our relationships – to who we are as individuals within and without communities.

Our third session was built around a discussion of, and response to, Carl Leggo’s (2006) most recent collection of poetry, Come-By-Chance. For session three, our theme was “longing.”

For our fourth session, we were delighted to be joined by Lorri Neilsen Glenn, poet and scholar, and Poet Laureate for Halifax Regional Municipality 2005-2009. In preparation for that session, we read Lorri’s recent collection of poetry (Neilsen Glenn, 2007), Combustion. We chose “possibilities” as the theme of our writing for session four.

Kathleen: When we began, I was tentative about what might ‘count’ as graduate-level research. Thankfully, the richness of each person’s writing and of our conversations soon drew me in, and I let go of preconceived notions. The writing and sharing of the poems offered a new way for me to understand the complexities of my personal and professional development as a counsellor. I now understand poetic inquiry as a way of learning that is necessarily both reflective and experiential.

Shamim: When Nancy first suggested I be a participant in a research project on poetic inquiry, my insides laughed – Me? Poetry? She must be joking! I expressed my doubts to John, too. However, against my own judgement, I accompanied Nancy, more out of my affection and respect for her. I don’t exactly know when the initial hesitation and reluctance changed to fascination for the discovery of the new self. That self, awakened in this journey with John, Kathleen, and Nancy, may never sleep again – ever.

The fact that I have a poem in me is a discovery, like a new world.

It’s a very strange feeling, you know like something you knew existed but did not know what it was.

I suppose everyone has a poem in them waiting to come out.

Nancy: It was the word “identity” that grabbed me initially. I was struggling with my identity as a mature student in a university that mostly offers undergraduate programs. I was trying to connect with other mature women who were feeling invisible on campus. I was struck by one woman who referred to herself as a loser because she didn’t complete some formal education when she was younger. I felt like a winner doing graduate studies. I like diversity: sexualities, ethnicities, age, class, gender, abilities. When I experience diversity, I can be myself. I love poetry and research. I am a risk taker. All these elements attracted me to the project.

The Poetry

John: My writing, my research, is about identities
— my own identities. I am in an ongoing process of discovering, struggling with, understanding, and embracing my identities. This poem was written some weeks after I was diagnosed with prostate cancer, a diagnosis I received half-way into this research project. I am indebted to Colin Bernhardt (in conversation) for the visualization exercise which led to this poem.

**Untitled [For Now]**

I go out
to other universes
riding
on the rhythms of space
and a voice.

I see everyone
every molecule of creation.
I take all back
gently
inside me
pulling myself
gently
back into myself.

Sounds echo
from the chambers
of my past—
ancestors who remembered me
before I was born.

I breathe in the center
of who I am.
Healing.
Caring.
Loving.
Embracing my world
and its inhibitions.

Shamim: This past year I had to explore difficult questions about my identity. Many of my assumptions about who I am, my very being, were shattered. I walked a painful path with John, Nancy, and Kathleen, and, through it all, somewhere in the background, was family — 60 individuals who love me. My poem “Shifting” is all about moving. Shifting was an important aspect of my life in India and I think has added diversity to my identity. This poetic inquiry brought me face to face with the differences and similarities in thoughts, cultures, and languages of Canada and India.

**Shifting**

Twenty years of married life
umar armaan zeeshan and me
shifted twelve houses
Twelve times my world
turned into a few
scattered cardboard boxes
Twelve times I opened a new door
Twelve times one week felt like one hour
Twelve times I told myself
“Not to worry ... Everything is going to be OK”
Twelve times I he you and them
fused

Nancy: “Solipsism” wrote itself, beginning with the first thought that came to my mind. What emerged reflects my challenge in finding a voice for my passions — a gentle, practical voice that others can take in, even though it often describes my anguish. Now I sense a tension between knowledge and wisdom, self and other, order and chaos, creativity and dogma. The three women I name are leaders in movements to which I ascribe; each has contributed to my understanding of global despair and all have been role models in my academic journey. Naming them here somehow supports my emerging identity. Yes, and my age plays a part in both my struggles to be heard and to be silent. I am discovering how elders in my own life complete the human ecology.
Solipsism

I can’t think of anything smart to write
I want to write something profound
I want to use big words
like ubiquity
solipsism or quantum

With quantum this and quantum that I could sound brilliant
with original thoughts
slipping effortlessly from my brain out of my mouth
in soft seductive tones
words received with oohs and aahs yeah ... that makes sense
isn’t she smart, so original
like Danah Zohar, Margaret Wheatley, Joanna Macy
I want to make sense be systematic pragmatic grounded

yet still reaching up so high
that my finger tips disappear briefly
teasing down indigo petals
falling softly
to land in chaos around my silver crown

Kathleen: “Possibilities” emerged in another writing space during the course of the research project;
I was surrounded by teenage writers, and soaking up their wonderful vibes. As a graduate student
in a counselling program, I’d been having lots of conversations about how to work with the notion
of potential in people’s lives. This poem teeters on the edge of being about me and being about me
as a counsellor, working with the possibilities of others.
Possibilities

possibilities
must be tricked sometimes
into
stepping out into the light.

they prefer to cower.
if left to their own devices, they will lounge around inside
bumping into one another in the dark.

I find
if I make concessions, make an offer
enticing enough
I can tempt possibility into showing itself.

so, I offer humility.
trade hard work for a moment of peace.

a possibility responds in kind,
 inches forward out of safety,
 dripping limitations from its coatsleeves
 and leaving fear behind in muddied footprints.

Closing

Shamim: There is no end to this journey. Its vastness is like the horizon. The distance I have covered from where I started fascinates me, and the limitless possibilities are exciting.

Kathleen: Now that the research is finished, and I’ve completed my graduate program, I’m extremely thankful for the opportunities this research project created. I was craving an outlet that allowed me to explore the effects of the experience of graduate studies on me as a changing person, and the changes in my identity will shift from my experience as a student and whether I can nurture the changes in spite of the pressures of my rural community to remain the same. Can I integrate a new identity as a poet into my old life? Can I risk exposing tender parts of myself to others who assume to know me well? Shall I risk appearing an old fool?

Nancy: I’m reminded of T. S. Eliot’s words from “Little Gidding”: “The end is where we start from.” I have finished my work at the university and I have returned to my old life. Seeds of poetry continue to germinate within me from the research. I wonder how my identity will shift from my experience as a student and whether I can nurture the changes in spite of the pressures of my rural community to remain the same. Can I integrate a new identity as a poet into my old life? Can I risk appearing an old fool?

John: Leading a research project about identities when my own world was unsettled to the core with the discovery of a new identity – a person with cancer – reminded me of how research can be personally meaningful. Poetic inquiry is a form of research that can help us renew our understanding of our own lives, and make new connections with the lives of others. I am grateful to Kathleen, Nancy, and Shamim for their thoughtful engagement in this journey.
References


Biographies

John J. Guiney Yallop is a parent, a partner, and a poet. He is also an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at Acadia University where he teaches literacy and writes poetry.

Kathleen Naylor now holds a Master of Education in Counselling from Acadia University. She lives on the south shore of Nova Scotia where she practices the crafts of counselling, community-building, and creative exploration.

Nancy Taylor has a B.A. (Women’s Studies and Sociology) from the University of Victoria and recently completed a Master of Education in Counselling at Acadia University. She works as a counsellor, clinical supervisor, and facilitator in the public and private sectors in rural BC.

Shamimara Sharif is a woman with a husband, kids, family, friends, and a job (student support teacher). She holds a Master of Education from Acadia University.
Picture students starting to head-nod in the middle of your class. You wonder what might grab their attention and, perhaps, have them learn. Wouldn’t we all like to engage our students and enhance their learning through active processes? We often seek solutions by considering what we can do to be more entertaining or relevant. One student-centred solution is moving students (literally) by putting the (physically) active in active learning.

The approach advocated in this paper is based on a somatic sensibility – from “soma” meaning the body in its wholeness – the integration of thinking, feeling, and acting. The discussion shows how students can be brought fully into learning through movement, music, and interaction. Examples include: “The Leaders Body: Moving to the Next Level,” which incorporates postures, moving to selected music clips, and working in small groups to learn about five dispositions of the body (determination, openness, flexibility, stability, and centre); “Finding Flow,” which includes an experiential process in groups of five that brings alive the spectrum from boredom to optimal experience to anxiety; and “Building a Humour Body,” which is based on both Reich’s (1960) notions about armorung and the chakra system.

Assumptions and Rationale

Two quotations that reflect the perspectives of somatics and physical engagement in learning are: “Book learning tends to stay in the book;” and “Learning is a myth until it is embodied” (Strozzi Heckler, 1993). Another reason for including movement in our classes comes from what we know about attention span in lectures. Various reports (Bligh, 2000; McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006; Young, Robinson, & Alberts, 2009) show that when listening to a lecture, attention drops precipitously after 10 to 30 minutes. You may be saying to yourself that neither your students nor you have such a short attention span. Oh, look, a kitty!
Yet some individuals can be distracted. Some instructors seek to combat attention problems with straight lecture by using discussion. Yet, studies of student participation in such discussions found that in groups of five, the most engaged person contributes 43% but the least engaged member only contributes 7%; in groups of eight, the least engaged five members contribute a mere 3 to 9% (Gibbs, 1992).

Three specific examples from senior undergraduate courses of how students become actively engaged in learning sessions mentally, physically, and emotionally can be found in the next sections. Each of these activities can be completed during one class session (50 minutes is workable; 80 minutes is desirable). These precise examples, though used in a Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, may be applicable to a variety of audiences – and readers are encouraged to apply the general principles to their own domains of practice.

Example One: “The Leader’s Body: Moving to the Next Level”

The premise of this session is that there are five dispositions (determination, openness, stability, flexibility, and centre) that are useful for leaders. When the qualities are limited, it can be a liability. When the qualities exist in excess, it can also be a problem. Using somatic engagement with these dispositions, students can assess their current strengths and weaknesses and see opportunities to develop where they see fit. Departing from the notion that all is cerebral, the position taken is that all (deep) learning involves a structural transformation. The activities are based on the work of Julio Olalla who claims, “Music speaks directly to the emotions. It allows us to be in touch with the pulse of life” (personal communication, October, 2005).

For each of the five dispositions, I lead students through postures, moving to selected music. For example, for determination, we adopt a posture much like a martial artist delivering a forward punch. We then march to “Motivation, Determination” (from a CD you probably have at home, Run To Cadence With The United States Navy), walk with determination to The Proclaimers’s “I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles),” and dance to Marc Anthony’s “I Need to Know.” Students are encouraged to notice if this disposition is familiar and a strength, or if it is more of a “domain of learning.” Students engage in reflection (e.g., “where in my life would this disposition be useful?”) and are then presented with some tips to develop determination (e.g., specific physical exercises). We then progress through each of the remaining dispositions in similar fashion.

After going through the five dispositions, students are invited to move to a location in the room to meet with other students who share their selection of a particular disposition as the one that they most want to develop. They discuss some of their current situations that are limited by the lack of this disposition and they consider what is possible if they enhance this disposition. I also invite students with strength in the particular disposition to share ideas for those who are seeking to expand in it. As a result of participation in this session, students report new practical self-awareness that applies to their personal and professional leadership and communication.

Example Two: Finding Flow

In this learning experience, I present students with basic theory and concepts of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990), which essentially look at the relationship between challenges and skills. When skills exceed challenges, we experience boredom. When the challenges are greater than our skills, we feel anxious. When skills and challenges are in balance, we have the optimal experience of Flow.

We then discuss some of the components of Flow (e.g., time warps [slow or fast], lost sense of self, intense focus, performance at peak levels, effortlessness, internal satisfaction, regaining a larger sense of self). We then get into the fun of moving (literally) to engage the students in active learning, where classroom learning would often stop. One way students can have a full experience of the range from boredom to Flow to anxiety is by learning to juggle. We can alter the challenge by using scarves or by increasing and decreasing the number of balls being juggled. Another fun and engaging way to demon-
strate and experience this continuum is in an activity with five students. One student is in the centre with one student on each side, one behind, and one facing. A student on one side asks the central student to spell simple words. The student on the other side offers simple addition and subtraction questions. The student behind gives the beginning of poems or songs that need to be completed by the student in the middle. The central student must become a mirror for movements completed by the student facing him/her. We begin by having the four students surrounding the central student provide their challenges one at a time. It becomes evident quickly that only answering simple spelling or arithmetic problems can be boring. We then add one challenge at a time so that the student in the middle is doing one, then two, then three, then four challenges at once. Everyone can see the progressive challenges moving the student from boredom to Flow to anxiety. This can be done first as a (rather entertaining) class demonstration and then with all students working in groups of five so that each student can have the experience of being “it.” This session provides experiential learning about a core concept that can be applied to virtually any teaching/learning domain. Students reflect on both their own experiences as learners and also on how they can structure learning environments as teachers and coaches to reduce boredom and anxiety, while increasing the likelihood of optimal experience.

Example Three: Building a Humour Body

Two different and disparate sets of ideas helped direct me to create this session. Wilhelm Reich, (1960) who was a contemporary of Sigmund Freud, observed that “talk therapy” was effective for many people, but it didn't seem to work for everyone. He postulated that there was something going on in the body that might be released to help people. Reich noticed that individuals would carry tension in particular areas or bands around the body that he described as “armor.” He asserted that people were protectively walled off from an outer world of painful experiences. This armor would prevent the free flow of energy, and therapeutic methods, he supposed, could help people to give up their emotional armor. Reich proposed that there were seven specific rings of armoring that might be observed: (a) ocular: forehead, eyes, cheekbones, tear duct glands; (b) oral: lips, chin, throat; (c) neck: when armored, holding back crying, anger; (d) chest; (e) diaphragm; (f) abdominal contractions; and (g) pelvic region. In another of my curiosities about systems of understanding the body, I was moved to explore the chakra system. It seems that many people who are interested in personal growth have heard of the “chakras,” but for many it is just a term or some ideas that are known superficially. The chakras are seven power or energy centers in the body. The state of each reflects the health of a particular area of the body. It reflects your psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Every thought and experience gets filtered through chakra databases. Each event is recorded in your cells – “your biography becomes your biology.” When chakra energy is blocked or misdirected, emotional and physical illness can arise. The seven chakras are named and numbered as follows: (7) Crown; (6) Third Eye; (5) Throat; (4) Heart; (3) Solar Plexus; (2) Sacrum; and (1) Root – Pelvis. When the two ideas of armoring and chakras are placed in juxtaposition, there are clear commonalities.

Not giving myself too big a pat on the back for seeing the connections, I thought there was sufficient basis to use these six or seven areas as a guide to developing movement practices. What I created and present to students is playful movement to music as a way to create a “humour body.”

This little program can be seen as a lighthearted and initial endeavor to begin to let go, release, and lighten up. By asserting the intention to remove or reduce armor or tension, the process can start to unfold. I invite students to journey with me through the body from the perspective that here is a series of suggestions and alternatives and you are encouraged to play, create, alter, develop, and fashion your own individual practices that serve you. We begin with some general warm-up; taking some good breaths, giving ourselves a shake. We then journey through the body.

Students are asked to move to the music, smile, set their intention for the practice, do whatever stretching they wish to do and get ready for the cavalcade of playful moving that lies ahead. We start
with the first chakra – the root/pelvic band of armor. This area of the body is associated with basic safety and is the foundation of our mental and emotional health. The root includes the feet, the legs, and the pelvic area. We begin by connecting to the earth and getting grounded. Music that has deep, relatively slow percussion is helpful. I like “Origins” by Glen Velez from Rhythms Of The Chakras: Drumming For The Body’s Energy Centers. We move side to side with legs spread, deliberately stepping alternating feet to the ground. Next, we start the letting go, freeing up, and playfully releasing tension process. We want to get the hips moving and think about letting go of fears and concerns (that may be associated with our basic needs not being met). Some music we use here includes: “Hippy Hippy Shake” by The Swing- ing Blue Jeans, “My Hips Don’t Lie” by Shakira, and “Shake Shake Shake (Shake Your Booty)” by KC & The Sunshine Band.

We then go through each of the remaining chakras/bands of armor. Space (and the intention of this article) does not allow for exposition of all of the movements and music for the entire body. Interested readers can find a full description of the program in The HoHo Dojo: Lighten Up and Love Life Laughing (Strean, 2008).

This whole program probably depends as much on intention and a playful spirit as it does on any particular movements or music. After students have gone through the bands of the body and chakras, an enjoyable way to close is by shaking away any residual tension and armor with their own freestyle jam session. They are encouraged to think about anything they have been clinging to that they want to let go. They are asked to consider where they have been protecting themselves, where they can recognize that they are safe and give some muscles a break. We move to the music and let the music move us. We play with different rhythms and movements to feel what gives us the best sense of lightness, freedom, and energy.

This session can achieve a variety of learning outcomes, somewhat depending on the context in which it is applied. For one, students get a deeper understanding of a somatic approach and what it means to work through the body. For many students in my context, seeing playful and non-traditional ways to release tension through physical movement adds a valuable approach to their repertoire. The activity could also be used strictly in the context of self-awareness and personal development.

Conclusion

These three examples show learning experiences that engage students physically, emotionally, and mentally. I hope that you will consider and explore how these ideas can help you to create similar active learning in your own classes.

References


**Biography**

William B. Strean is a Professor in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta where his research interests include laughter and humour, somatics, and experiential learning.
Videoconference Teaching for Graduate Courses in Educational Administration

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One of the “tidal dilemmas” addressed by the 2009 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education conference concerned physical vs. virtual learning environments. Videoconference teaching is an alternative to traditional classroom instruction and a subset of the broader field of distance education. Based on my recent experiences with videoconference teaching, this paper explores the application of videoconference teaching to graduate students in educational administration, with reference to the nature of both the subject matter and the learners.

In today’s age of widely available information and communication technologies, it is not surprising that videoconference technology is being used to deliver some university courses and programs. This technology is particularly attractive for the delivery of graduate programs to students for whom an on-campus, face-to-face course is less accessible for a variety of reasons. Moreover, for those pursuing graduate studies in educational administration, the nature and context of the learners and the needs of the school system provide encouragement for the delivery of courses and programs by various distance education formats, including videoconference teaching.

Between the Fall 2006 and Winter 2009 terms, I had the opportunity to teach the following three graduate courses in educational administration to a total of six classes via videoconference: Administrative Theory I, Educational Theory and School Administration, and Legal Aspects of Education. In each of the six classes, the course was delivered to students at two sites – the Fredericton campus and the Saint John campus of the University of New Brunswick (UNB). The majority of these students were enrolled in the Master’s of Education (M.Ed.) program in Educational Administration at UNB, most of them practicing teachers in the K-12 system who were studying part-time by taking evening courses. Total class enrollment averaged 14 students, with a range of 10 to 19 students per term, and there were approximately equal numbers of students at each site. In this paper, I share my reflections on the teaching and learning experience in light of selected literature on videoconference teaching and with reference to the nature of the subject matter and the learners.

Videoconference instruction can be consid-
Videoconference Teaching for Graduate Courses in Educational Administration

Educational Quality

Educational quality considerations were important in my decision to offer graduate courses by videoconference. Given my experience with teaching in the traditional classroom, my perception of a quality teaching and learning experience was guided by my practices and beliefs as applied in that setting. As a result, in my planning for videoconference teaching, I attempted to replicate as closely as possible the important elements of the strategies, interactions, and activities that I would normally use in the traditional classroom. Since these were graduate courses, in which the emphasis was on engaging students in thinking with each other about ideas in an active and critical fashion, I wanted to ensure that the videoconference format would allow that. This meant, for example, that it was important for me to ensure that the cameras at both sites were set up to maximize interaction among students during discussions, rather than placing the focus solely on me as the lecturer. I wanted to create an instructional setting that resembled, as much as possible within the videoconference format, my perception of a “real” classroom.

Some of my students expressed to me a similar desire. Some had taken other graduate courses by audio conference or in an online format, but they preferred live interaction with an instructor and with classmates. At the same time, a traditional classroom setting at one site, most often in Fredericton, was not as accessible to those living closer to the Saint John campus, located about an hour’s drive away. Those students desiring a quality learning experience, as provided by the videoconference format, now had the opportunity to receive it at either of two locations.

Alsunbul (2002) commented, in reference to the quality of distance education programs, on the importance and influence of instructor training and dispositions as well as the perceptions of students. I needed to be willing to learn to use the videoconference technology and to do so in the interests of those students who could not come to the Fredericton campus to take these courses, but who lived closer to the Saint John campus. Similarly, my students at both sites had to be comfortable with the use of the technology and a learning setting in which either the instructor or half of their classmates or both were not present in the immediate classroom, but located at a remote site.

Learning Community

A major challenge often cited in distance education literature is student engagement. Videoconference instruction provided a means of building a learning community and a sense of connection and engagement among members of my classes in both sites. Bloomberg (2007), who researched the factors and conditions perceived to foster and inhibit the formation and development of a learning community...
through videoconferencing, found that instructor beliefs were an important factor in faculty members’ perceptions of learning communities. Consistent with my pedagogical beliefs, I employed a number of strategies to encourage the creation of a learning community.

One of these strategies was to encourage interaction among students with their classmates at the other site. This is consistent with Millson and Wi-lemon’s (2008) view of dialogue as a key element in educational quality. To promote dialogue and interaction among the students, I would often present a topic for the students to discuss in small groups at each site; following that discussion, I would have the students from each group share highlights of their discussion with the whole class. While the cameras would be focused on me when presenting the discussion topic, I would adjust the cameras for the whole class debriefing so that the students at each site were looking at, and speaking to, each other. During student-led group presentations, I emphasized that the students ensure their classmates at the other site were able to participate fully in the discussion and other activities. I modelled some strategies for accomplishing that – for example, specifically posing questions and watching and listening carefully for questions and comments from the students at the remote site. Also key was ensuring that the students at the opposite site had received all the materials being used during my presentations or student presentations.

Another important strategy for me was instructor presence at both sites. Since I was located in Fredericton, I conducted most classes from that site. However, at least three times each term, I travelled to the Saint John campus to lead the class from there. This allowed me to meet my Saint John students in person, and convey to them that they were important to me as well. These trips gave them the chance, for example, to discuss their assignments with me and have some additional interaction with me after the formal videoconference lesson was concluded. Many of the Saint John students took advantage of my visits to talk to me about their M.Ed. program and ask for advice on course selections and program planning.

My third strategy was to plan a closing activity for the course in which the students would meet face to face at one site for the final class of the term. In all these courses, the major assignment was a term paper in which students would apply their understanding of course concepts to an issue or situation from their professional experience. During the final class, students would give an oral presentation and present a poster or some other visual display on the topic of their major term paper as a means of sharing their learning with their peers. I would provide some light refreshments as part of this culminating activity. In my experience, students seemed to enjoy meeting their classmates from the other site after seeing them throughout the term on a video screen. These and other strategies were intended to ensure that all students felt connected to their peers and to me in a manner similar to a traditional classroom.

### Technological Resources

Videoconference instruction, like any form of distance education, requires reliable technology that is accessible to students, usable by instructors, and designed to support learning (Alsunbul, 2002). Bezau and Lipsett (1994) listed equipment such as two telephone lines, a document camera, a videocassette player, and a fax machine to teach by interactive television in 1994. In a prophetic comment regarding video quality, they observed as follows: “The solution to poor video resolution, high definition television, is on the horizon but will probably not be in widespread use until after the end of the century” (p. 3). By contrast, I had access to an Internet connection to transmit data between the two sites, so that I could display PowerPoint slides on my computer and onto a large screen in both sites. I could also post PowerPoint slides and other materials on the Blackboard site for the course, thus allowing students to preview visual materials prepared by me or by their peers before class.

In both sites, the various controls for the videoconference technology were reasonably user-friendly for students and for me. When I conducted the class from the Fredericton site, there was an undergraduate student assistant employed at the Saint John site to turn on the equipment and provide assis-
tance to me and to my students. When I conducted the class from Saint John, I would ask willing students to operate the equipment in Fredericton. This was usually limited to ensuring that the relevant cameras were directed properly, and the intended images on the screen were appearing correctly. Since most of my students were practising elementary and high school teachers, they were normally able to perform routine equipment operations and some trouble-shooting procedures.

However, access to technical support was a source of concern for us on several occasions. A recurring problem for each of the courses was unexpected lost connections between the two sites. This happened quite regularly – almost predictably at times – and was usually easily corrected. However, on occasion, it was necessary for the student assistant in Saint John to completely reboot the equipment at that site before we could re-establish the videoconference connection. Since these classes were conducted during the evening, the full-time classroom support staff members were not available and the student assistant had only limited training and scope for intervention. As a result, there were class meetings that ended prematurely, with students being asked to conclude some discussions on their own at the remote site. The presence of a classroom telephone at each site allowed me to contact the students at the other site when such problems arose to make alternate arrangements.

A significant access issue associated with currently available videoconference technology is that we were limited to only two sites. Since the Fredericton and Saint John campuses are located approximately 100 km apart, this extended the reach of these three courses to students living and working within reasonable proximity to either site. However, this did not help those students living in other areas of the province. This requires faculty members planning to deliver videoconference courses to choose two sites each term on the basis of such factors as student demand, instructor preference, and available technology. Since teachers from all school districts in New Brunswick require graduate courses to pursue advanced certification, particularly those seeking leadership positions, UNB’s Faculty of Education has a mandate and responsibility to find ways to serve students located far from campus. While the availability of videoconference instruction has been welcomed by those able to benefit from it, the present limit of two sites is a constraint to more frequent use, which has led to more use of audio-conference and online formats for distance delivery of our graduate courses.

Student Comments and Instructor Reflection

Through the student opinion survey conducted for each course at UNB, I received some feedback on student experiences with this format. While most appreciated the use of technology and my visits to both sites, a few students found the technology and my presence at the other site distracting, with the observation that students in the same location as the instructor tended to dominate the class discussion. This latter point reinforces for me the need not only to visit both sites, but to attend specifically to the engagement of students in both sites at all times. My experience with videoconference instruction supports the proposition that this technology can foster the teaching and learning needs of graduate students in educational administration. Issues of quality, community, and technology can be addressed by appropriate choices, efforts, and perceptions of instructors, students, and technical staff so that videoconference instruction can be an effective delivery format.

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**Biography**

Ken Brien is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick. His teaching and research interests include educational administration, school law, professional learning communities, and parent-teacher interactions in schools.
Creativity and Writing: The Postcard Project

Mercedes Rowinsky-Geurts
Wilfrid Laurier University

The purpose of the conference presentation upon which this paper is inspired was to present an innovative approach to motivate students to write in a second language during a first-year Spanish class. Usually, students comply with writing exercises that convey basic thoughts, due to constrained vocabulary and limited knowledge of grammatical concepts. The pieces they create are often simple repetitions of material already present in the textbook. In this case, the idea was to create a project that would be developed during the whole academic year. It consisted of creating a story of 100 words or less that would provoke the reader to think beyond the text and also motivate him/her to make connections between the title, the content, and the hidden message of the story. The format was a postcard, and the students had to add a creative piece of art on one side of the postcard and a story on the opposite side. The artwork was intended to add to the story. The objective of the project was for students to use their higher order cognitive abilities and subsequently realize higher levels of achievement (Burrowes, 2003; Railsback, 2002).

The activity also aimed to encourage deeper student learning and self-regulated learning behaviours (Herington, 2008). The challenge was obvious: would students feel intimidated when presented with the project? How would they respond to the strict demands of the assignment? How would they deal with the creative aspect? How would they respond to formative feedback? How would they react to the public exhibition of their work? Throughout this article, responses to these queries are presented along with a discussion on how the activity could be applied across disciplines with similar end results. I hope this is the beginning of a productive dialogue.

Preamble

Creating challenging activities that foster critical thinking and promote lifelong learning is always at the top of my priorities as an instructor of a second language. Students not only have to learn to express themselves in the target language, but they also have to be motivated to explore issues
that are relevant to them in order to make the connection between learning a foreign language and their own daily life. As part of my constant search for new and creative writing tasks, I learned about a project already established in Santiago, Chile in 2001 called Santiago en 100 palabras (Santiago in 100 words). The objective of this project is to give an opportunity to common people to write stories that reflect life in the city in 100 words or less. The format is a postcard that includes artwork created by the author or borrowed from another source. A selection committee chooses the best entries, which are exhibited in train and subway stations. Later, they are printed as a small book and handed to people in the subway. This is not only a great way to promote creativity and writing while reflecting on their city, but it is also a very positive approach to make the voices of the people heard all through the country.

As I learned more about the project, I thought it could work perfectly in my Introduction to Spanish class that has approximately 130 students each year. This is a full credit course. Creating challenging activities for such a large class can be risky. It usually also creates more work for the instructor, but the end result promises to be unforgettable and rewarding. I brought the project to the class, adapting the idea to make it meaningful for students and providing them with the opportunity to express themselves on topics relevant to them, while facilitating greater comprehension of course material (Davis, 1993).

Avoiding Anonymity

One of the most cumbersome problems to solve in a large class is the issue of anonymity. Students can feel lost in the immensity of the classroom and may find that they’re not getting to know either their peers or the instructor. Also, their own learning style is sometimes not addressed by the method of instruction or evaluation. The Postcard Project was planned and structured in order to address various issues often encountered in a large class: it tries to accommodate different learning styles; emphasizes the relevance of the project in relation to a student's own life experience; allows students to practise material learned using a creative approach, while promoting active learning; gives students the opportunity to experience formative feedback throughout the learning process; fosters a learning environment where a sense of community is encouraged, while trying to eliminate anonymity; and cultivates lifelong learning experiences.

Active learning activities in a large class may seem like an insurmountable task, but if they are tailored according to students’ needs, cultural backgrounds, and ability, the instructor may find that these are actually some of the most gratifying teaching and learning experiences for both instructor and students. Research has proven that active learning improves students’ retention while enabling them to get to know their peers (Davis, 1993).

Project Guidelines

The goals and objectives for an activity must be clearly stated to students in order for them to take the task seriously (McClanahan & McClanahan, 2002). The project guidelines were included in the syllabus and the task was explained to students in detail. Enough time was allowed for questions and answers. Sample postcards were shown in class so students could have an idea of the final outcome. Among the many requisites for the project, the following were presented:

1. The story should have 100 words or less.
2. The title has to add to the story.
3. Look for a source of inspiration: a place, a person, an incident.
4. Since the story is short, keep the number of characters to a minimum.
5. Add a twist at the end, so readers will reflect on the content.
6. The story needs to fit on a regular postcard size: 16 cm by 11.5 cm.
7. The story will be printed on the back of the
postcard. On the front, you should create a graphic design to represent some aspect of the story. The graphic design could be created by you or by someone else. If the artwork comes from a different source, you need to cite the source. Some of your peers could be great artists; consult with them.

8. Before handing in your final version, a draft should be presented to the instructor by (date) before 10 a.m. There will be a box outside the office where you can drop your work. Also include a draft of the graphic design.

9. The final postcard will be evaluated out of 15%: story creativity and vocabulary 6%; introduction 3%; twist at the end 3%; and graphic design and presentation 3%.

This activity allows students enough time to work on the story. Students are presented with the project at the start of the course in September. In February, the first draft has to be submitted and the instructor provides formative feedback. The final copy is submitted in March. Some creative members of the class worked on the design for those students who were not artistic. Others consulted the instructor if they were facing difficulties in finding a topic. Mind-mapping exercises were shown in class in order to facilitate the writing process. Because the activity structure, objectives, and related course material were thoroughly explained, most students could ably complete the task on time while fulfilling the requirements. When students were lacking in some areas, they had enough time to revise their drafts and receive formative feedback from the instructor (Yazedjian & Kolkhorst, 2007). Students found that formative feedback gave them the opportunity to explore new possibilities and solve mistakes, which in the end resulted in a more positive learning experience and accommodated different learning styles, while promoting an increased interest in the learning outcome.

Process

While the course material was being covered, students were made aware of possible topics to use in their postcards. The class used WebCT as a communication tool, and many students requested further information from the instructor via the communication board and/or contacted their peers searching for artistic people to help them with their graphic design. Throughout the creative process, the students and instructor got to know each other, which is unusual when dealing with a large class. The excitement was palpable in the classroom whenever the Postcard Project was mentioned. Students were aware that the end result was going to be exhibited to the University community at the end of the semester. The fact that the project was ongoing and always discussed during class time when questions arose, also promoted students’ attendance. They felt personally responsible for the learning process and took ownership of the project with a deep sense of pride and responsibility. At the same time, they felt more motivated to learn since each new language structure, vocabulary, or grammatical concept could be used in the project.

As students worked on their postcards, they found themselves consulting with each other and the instructor while obtaining formative feedback. As the project came to an end, most of the postcards were completed on time, while a few students found themselves struggling to finish. Only two students out of 130 did not successfully complete the project; the rest obtained excellent results. The instructor laminated the completed postcards individually and prepared them for the exhibit. Students actively participated in this stage of the process also. Research has shown that when students are empowered to be active participants in the learning process, class size is not necessarily inversely proportionate to learning (Felder, 1997).

Using clotheslines and clothespins (a very affordable way to create an exhibit), a students’ lounge was converted for one day into the venue where the postcard exhibit took place. All completed postcards were hung from clotheslines, creating a visually attractive setting. The postcards’ topics addressed many issues that are usually not discussed in a first-year language class: suicide, drug abuse, violence against women, poverty, and family problems, among others.
Outcome and Conclusion

When planning an unusual activity such as this one, I am always concerned with students’ response. I was anxious about having such high expectations for a beginner’s class and found myself questioning the viability of the task. I was also aware of the time constraints that such an activity could create for me as the only person in charge of feedback and corrections. Since most of the postcards required changes, providing formative feedback could have resulted in a very time consuming endeavour. Fortunately, since the specifications for the project were clearly explained to students and the learning outcomes and process were noticeably explicit, though most of the students required some feedback, it was not as cumbersome as I anticipated. Since students got to know each other better throughout this activity, they became more engaged with class content and the aspect of anonymity in the classroom was evidently reduced (Cooper & Robinson, 2000; McClanahan & McClanahan, 2002; Michaelsen, 2002).

The Postcard Project resulted in one of the most rewarding teaching and learning experiences of my career. The expectations were high, the demands on students were many, and the challenge posted to them seemed complex. What could have been considered disincentives to attempt an activity such as this one resulted in positive outcomes; some of them, like the actual content of the short stories, were completely unexpected for me. I was not only surprised by the stories, but I was also moved by the openness of students to convey such risky topics. I believe part of their response to the challenge was the fact that they knew that their postcards were going to be exhibited publicly. It seems that projects like this, where students are offered the opportunity to express their feelings exploring affective learning, are not often found within the university classroom. The merging of writing and art is not something that they had encountered in other classes.

The uniqueness of the project was a perfect avenue for students to push boundaries, explore possibilities and find a forum for their voices. In a questionnaire completed by 60 students during the last week of classes, the following question was asked: How does the postcard project compare to assignments done in other classes? Table 1 shows the number of responses to the questionnaire regarding the Postcard Project. The questionnaire was voluntary. Of the total of respondents, 95% stated that the project should be kept as part of the course components in the future. The activity was relevant to students, according to the responses to the questionnaire because they found that the project supported rather than distracted them from the course content (McKeachie, 1999). Overall, the Postcard Project was a success.

The project could be tailored to various disciplines, offering students the opportunity to be creative and to explore ideas, concepts, and reflections about many topics. The exhibit component was extremely well received because, according to students, it is not often that they are offered the opportunity to observe their peers’ work in higher education.

Figures 1 and 2 depict a sample postcard from the exhibit, and the exhibit on the day it was open to the University community.

I hope this article will inspire others to try this innovative approach to exploring active learning in their classes.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Clearly explained</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share with others</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unique</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
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<td>Creative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply knowledge</td>
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<td>Stimulating</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly explained</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day and Night (Translation)

She is thirteen years old and lives in Tula, Mexico. Her father used to beat her mother and now they are divorced. She lives with her three sisters, her mother and her new stepfather. They seem happy and the new husband is generous and charming. The apartment is very busy during the day, but at night a mysterious quietness comes down on it. She easily hides her secret during the day, but at night she hopes that someone would help her. He comes into her bedroom at the same time each night. She shouts and she hates him, but she doesn’t say anything to keep her mother happy. Nobody must know. The apartment keeps her secret.

Figure 1
Sample Postcard

Figure 2
Exhibit on the Opening Day

1 Permission for publication was obtained, 2009.
References


Biography

Mercedes Rowinsky-Geurts is an Associate Professor in the Department of Languages and Literatures at Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU). She received the WLU Outstanding Teacher Award in 2000, the Faculty Mentoring Award in 2005, and the 3M National Teaching Fellowship in 2008.
Quality Matters: A Faculty-Centred Program to Assure Quality in Online Course Design

Kay Shattuck
Quality Matters Programs, USA

One of the dilemmas faced by today’s faculty is assuring quality in online courses. As one solution to that dilemma, Quality Matters (QM), a program of MarylandOnline, built a rubric of design standards informed by existing research literature and best practices. The rubric was implemented within a faculty-centred, peer review process in which colleagues share their expertise to facilitate course design improvements and to achieve an established level of quality in online course design. This article will describe the basic tenets and processes of QM as an inter-institutional quality assurance program for online learning.

Introduction

Quality in online courses need not be caught in the riptides that can result from the continuing waves of educational refocusing. While online learning might appear to be a new wave, it is not. It has become the most accepted form of distance education, bringing along with it legions of faculty inexperienced in designing and teaching in distance formats. That was the dilemma faced in the early 2000s by members of MarylandOnline (www.marylandonline.org), a voluntary consortium of community colleges and universities in Maryland.

A definition of distance education seems in order. Moore and Kearsley’s (1996, 2005) widely cited definition points out that distance education is much more than piping traditional classroom courses through a communication conduit, such as the Internet. In fact, they define distance education as “planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching, requiring special course design and instruction techniques, communication through various technologies, and special organizational and administrative arrangements” (2005, p. 2). It is a system of education focused on enabling and supporting selected learner-teacher, learner-content, and learner-learner interactions via a communication technology (Moore, 1989).

Attempts to assure and record quality in distance education have a long history. Distance education has been documented by Russell (2001) as
far back as 1928 as not being significantly different than education delivered in traditional classroom-based settings. Russell assembled and continues to post research findings on the http://nosignificantdifference.org, website, including no significant differences in performance on graded assignments, final course grades, and other assessments of learning. It can be noted that some studies indicated significance in favor of either face-to-face or at a distance, but most indicated similar results when the two delivery formats were compared.

Recently, the US Department of Education (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of existing research on the effectiveness of online learning. The final report noted that, “on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction.” It was further noted that students in “blended conditions” (combining online and face-to-face) benefitted the most because of “additional learning time and instructional elements” (p. ix). The meta-analysis methodology used was limited to studies using random-assignment or controlled quasi-experimental design in web-based instruction. Only studies that examined “objective measures of student learning” were included in the final meta-analysis. Studies which focused “on student or teacher perceptions of learning or course quality” for example, were not included in the analysis (p. xii). The report cautioned “in generalizing to the K-12 population” since the 44 studies that met the study criteria came from adult learning settings, such as higher education or medical training (p. xii).

Quality Matters

As online formats were beginning their meteoric rise in popularity at the turn of the millennium, members of MarylandOnline faced the dilemma of assuring faculty of the quality of shared online courses. Course sharing and collaboration amongst consortium member community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities across the state of Maryland had been the motivation for organizing MarylandOnline in the mid-1990s.

As sharing of online courses became popular, faculty of MarylandOnline member institutions expressed concern about determining the quality of an ‘adopted’ course from another institution. As a result, Quality Matters (QM)¹ was envisioned as an inter-institutional peer review process to improve the quality of online courses. Grant funding from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), a federal grant of the US Department of Education, allowed for development of the project from 2003-2006. Since 2006, the program continues to grow as a not-for-profit, subscription-based program and now includes more than 365 subscribing institutions across the US (and the University of Guelph in Canada).²

At the 2009 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education conference in New Brunswick, Alex Lowry kicked off the discussion of dilemmas and problem-solving in today’s education by presenting a 2 x 2 problem/solution dilemma matrix. While it is not the purpose of this article to critique QM’s development from the Lowry model, I suggest that distance educator members of MarylandOnline envisioned a solution to the challenge of assuring quality in online courses. By using the work of leaders from research and best practices in the field, they developed a niche program focusing on course design and peer review for the improvement of online learning.

The Quality Matters Rubric™

Course design – the forethought and planning of an online course – includes selection of learning objectives, technology and media options, instructional strategies, and evaluation techniques (Moore & Kearsley, 2005; Shearer, 2007). Course design is one of many factors affecting online course quality. Other systemic factors include: course delivery (the way a course is taught); course content; the learning management system and its functionality (including

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¹ For more information on the program, visit www.qualitymatters.org.
² For the complete list of institutions visit http://www.qualitymatters.org/Documents/Subscriber%20List%20for%20Publication.pdf
technical support); the institutional infrastructure (for example, help desk, online library access, online tutoring access); instructor training; and learner readiness. The developers of QM faced the complex dilemma of assuring a level of quality by keeping their focus on course design. A faculty-centred set of values promoting continuous quality improvement guided efforts for faculty to improve their own online courses (with help from instructional designer when available). The resulting peer process was to be guided by a set of standards that would become the QM Rubric™.

The QM Rubric™ was developed in its current format in 2004 during the FIPSE grant period. Design principles put forward by Chickering and Ehrmann (1996) and the American Council on Education’s Guiding Principles for Distance Learning in a Learning Society (1996) and Distance Learning Evaluation Guide (2001) were piloted and consolidated (Shattuck, 2007). The aim was that the rubric would provide a practical definition and workable tool for determining a level of quality in online course design. The rubric was built upon best practices, existing distance education research, and instructional design principles (Sener & Shattuck, 2006).

The Rubric continues to be a living document that is reviewed and improved every two or three years following the same rigorous approach which has become the guiding principles of QM: collegial, collaborative, continuous, and centred in an academic foundation around student learning. For example, as a result of that process, the 2006-2008 version of the rubric added online components of blended courses.

The 2008-2010 version of the rubric includes eight general and 40 specific standards. The eight general standards include:

1. Course overview and introduction
2. Learning objectives
3. Assessment and measurement
4. Resources and materials
5. Learner engagement
6. Course technology
7. Learner support
8. Accessibility

Some examples of the standards include:

- Standard 1.1: Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.
- Standard 2.1: The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.
- Standard 3.1: The types of assessments selected measure the stated learning objectives and are consistent with course activities and resources.
- Standard 5.1: The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives.

Each of the 40 standards has an assigned point value (3=essential, 2=very important, 1=important). An interactive rubric tool which includes annotations and other explanations to assist faculty reviewers during a review is available to QM subscribers.

Courses under review meet QM standards by attaining an overall 85% score, including successfully meeting all of the 17 essential standards. The web-based, interactive rubric tool calculates and combines all scores and comments from the team. A detailed final report is presented directly to the faculty member whose course was reviewed.

The Quality Matters Process

The values of collegiality, collaboration, and academic foundations related to the impact of instructional

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3 Citations, resources, and referenced best practices can be found at http://www.qualitymatters.org/Documents/ Matrix%20of%20Research%20Standards%20FY0506.pdf

4 A listing of the 40 standards can be found at http://qminstitute.org/home/Public%20Library/About%20QM/ RubricStandards2008-2010.pdf
design on student learning are promoted by a course review process in which a faculty member seeks recommendations for improvement by a team of three online teaching peers who have received training on application of the QM Rubric™. The Rubric is a guideline to help experienced online instructors determine if a specific course meets QM standards. But, it is more than a review tool. The Rubric is part of a process in which peer reviewers make comments and recommendations for improvement of the course design. This can be considered from a constructivist lens as use of a set of guidelines by peers to guide discussion and offer recommendations to a colleague on specific course design improvements to enhance student learning.

Review teams are comprised of three members, including a subject matter expert (a faculty member who teaches in the same discipline as the course to be reviewed), a faculty member who is external to the institution which houses the course to be reviewed, and a QM master reviewer who chairs the review. The faculty member whose course is to be reviewed is also considered as an associate of the team. She or he provides initial information about the course and is encouraged to request focused attention on problematic areas in the course. Members of the review team are granted access to the online course and encouraged to advocate for students by taking a student view of the course. This is usually an enlightening experience for faculty who find themselves assuming a student perspective when entering and navigating an unfamiliar online course. Routinely, members of review teams comment on the benefits they gain from approaching an online course from a student’s perspective while reviewing a peer’s course.

The QM process is twofold: first, to make a decision on the current course design based on meeting QM quality standards; and second, to make comments and recommendations for improvement. A key activity of a QM review is the crafting of comments and recommendations by each team member as she or he looks for evidence for each of the 40 standards. Comments and recommendations for further improvement are to be made even when a standard is met at the QM threshold. The QM review process is not an evaluation of the teaching of the course, but a method of establishing and improving the quality of the design of the course. Evaluation of teaching is an institutional responsibility, not one for inter-institutional peer review.

The review team’s recommendations are key to the success of a review. Commenting on the strengths of the course as well as the weaknesses is expected. Training prior to being certified as a QM peer reviewer emphasizes that recommendations should be constructive, specific, measurable, sensitive, and balanced in a professional, collegial fashion. For example, a recommendation is more collegial if written in the following way:

The learning objectives in unit 2 were well written – specific, measurable, etc. I did however have trouble connecting the assessments to the learning objectives in that unit. I think you’ll want to review the learning objectives and make sure that they are reflected in the assessments.

This is more constructive and probably better received than commenting – “poor assessments” – to a professional colleague. All courses submitted for a QM review are expected to meet QM standards, either initially or upon revision. This confirms that the goal is for online faculty to assist peers in improving the design of their fully online or online components of blended courses.

Summary

In response to the challenges presented by the growth of online distance education and of emerging concerns of quality from faculty, QM, a faculty-focused program of peer review with the goal of improving course design of fully online and online components of blended courses, was developed as one solution. Built on the work of leaders in distance education in the form of existing distance education research, principles of instructional design, and best practices, the QM Rubric™ guides a team of faculty who teach online and have completed training in applying the
rubric in a collegial manner to others’ courses. Developed by visionaries as a regional solution to the dilemma of establishing quality assurance in online courses, the program finds a niche in addressing a dilemma shared by others. As a living set of tools and processes, QM provides some common language and standards for online faculty to improve and establish a level of quality in their own online courses.

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Biography

Kay Shattuck has been active with Quality Matters since its inception and serves as the Director of Research. She received her Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University and teaches online with their World Campus.
Most faculty will agree that students must learn to write well (Emerson, MacKay, MacKay, & Funnell, 2006), and in the sciences, a variety of approaches have been taken. In the College of Physical and Engineering Science at the University of Guelph, we have developed a way of embedding research, writing, and analytical skills into an introductory Nanoscience course that gives students the true-to-life experience of writing for publication, ignites their imaginations, and inspires them to do their best. Following the process of scholarly publication, students become researchers, authors, and reviewers for an electronic journal. Through appropriately timed workshops and tutorials, they receive support and feedback. Rubrics for the assessment of the students’ performances as authors and peer reviewers provide them with more insight into what constitutes work that falls below expectations, or meets or exceeds them. These rubrics also enable faculty to evaluate student contributions efficiently and fairly. In this essay, we showcase a suite of pedagogical tools that includes learning activities, open access software and assessment rubrics, and share our experiences of a faculty-librarian collaboration.

The Dilemma

In 2008 the College of Physical and Engineering Science at the University of Guelph introduced a new, interdisciplinary major. The first of its kind in Canada, the B.Sc. Nanoscience program focuses on an integrated approach to the investigation of nanoscale materials (a “nano” is one billionth of a metre): the study of the properties and synthesis of matter designed in dimensions from 1 to 100 nanometers (by comparison, a red blood cell is approximately 8,000 nanometers in diameter). Such materials possess novel chemical reactivity and physical properties that can lead to important new devices. By drawing upon the expertise of faculty from the pure and applied sci-
ences, the curriculum integrates complementary, but historically siloed, sciences. In addition, the program conforms to the University’s and College’s broader educational mission of supporting the development of the whole student, including his or her facility with written communication.¹

Research on writing reveals that “there is a specific deficiency in the writing skills of high school and college graduates, especially among engineering and science students” (National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges, 2003; Stormshak, 2004, p. 2816). Our own experience has taught us that beginning science students are poor writers. Many believe that written communication is not an essential part of their development or their future work, and that we, as instructors and mentors, have not helped them understand its importance. Our solution was to address these issues early in students’ academic career by embedding scientific writing and the following associated skills into the introductory course in Nanoscience (NANO*1000):

- definition of a scientific problem;
- critical thinking;
- strategic literature searching, critical reading, analysis, and synthesis;
- communication of ideas, engaging writing, and avoiding plagiarism through proper citing and referencing; and
- critical review of peers’ writing, and providing written feedback that is specific, constructive and respectful.

When course developers want to be intentional about supporting writing and associated skills, important questions present themselves: How can we make writing meaningful for our students, rather than just one more assignment to complete as quickly as possible, check off their “to do list,” then promptly forget? What kind of activity can we develop that will engage our students and motivate them to do their best? How can we support their efforts as beginning writers, provide useful, timely feedback that they can apply immediately to improve their performance, and give them an early taste of success?

The Electronic Journal Project

Our answer to these questions was to have our students follow the process of scholarly publication by becoming researchers, authors, and reviewers for an electronic journal we created specifically for this course. The possibility of being published by the end of their first year of undergraduate study was highly motivating for these competitive, high-achieving students, many of whom had been top performers in high school.

We provided our aspiring authors and peer reviewers with the rubrics that would be used to assess their performances. Our expectations were clearly articulated in language that described beginning, average, and above average performances. In addition, we developed customized, skill-development workshops and tutorials to support their learning efforts and increase their opportunity for success. These were woven into the curriculum and timed to coincide with their need for support. Thus, through these three aspects of our writing-in-the-sciences project – electronic journal, assessment rubrics, and “just-in-time” support workshops – we were able to provide first-year, first-semester students with a true-to-life experience of the scientific communication process that was both challenging and supportive.

The electronic journal

The central aspect of this project is our electronic journal. Da Vinci’s Notebook was created using free software called Open Journal Systems (OJS): http://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs-journals. Developed by the Public Knowledge Project (http://pkp.sfu.ca/about), this platform was the obvious choice for the course since the University of Guelph’s Library has been supporting open access publishing for close to a decade and is host to almost a dozen scholarly, OJS journals. OJS

¹ The institution’s learning objectives are available online at www.uoguelph.ca/registrat/calendars/undergraduate/current/c02/c02-learningobjectives.shtml
is an easy-to-use tool for managing the flow of documents between student authors, peer reviewers, and course instructors, and provides full, online functionality, including the crucial double-blind peer review. The software keeps track of manuscript versions; tracks the progress of reviewers and authors; includes customizable templates for all correspondence; and manages all stages of manuscript preparation. Even the tasks of copyediting, layout, and proofreading are folded into the software’s architecture to create a relatively seamless production process.

The development process was led by the College’s primary library contact, Peggy Pritchard, who also acts as the journal’s Editor-in-Chief. The current editors and scientific advisory board members are subject specialists from the College of Physical and Engineering Science, and technical support is provided by the Head of the Library’s Research Enterprise, and Scholarly Communications team.

Customized, “just-in-time” workshops and tutorials

Three skill-building workshops tailored to the writing assignment and timed for optimal support were conducted during the semester. Before students began their preliminary investigations of potential topics for their papers, a faculty member from the Department of Physics led a session on the critical reading of scientific papers. Using a recently-published article on nanochemistry that was one of the students’ required readings, he outlined the “anatomy” of a journal article and demonstrated three approaches: a five-minute review, thirty-minute review, and one- to two-hour review. Students began to feel less anxious about the reading requirements once they understood that time constraints are a reality for all scientists, as well as students.

During this real-time lesson in “scientist reading science,” the physicist admitted that he did not understand all of the chemistry in the article. This provided considerable encouragement to the students. They themselves were struggling with the basics and felt overwhelmed; it was both inspiring and instructive to hear a respected scientist admit to being puzzled, then listen to him summarize what he did understand, describe his assumptions about what he did not understand, and draw reasonable conclusions from an article that was outside his area of expertise. The students began to believe that they, too, could develop comparable ability, given time and practice.

After completing the next steps in the process – narrowing their topics and having them approved – our students were ready to conduct their research. At this point, a workshop on strategic literature searching using tools available both through the web and the University of Guelph’s Library portal was presented by one of the authors. Examining the strengths and drawbacks of web-based searching and discovering the enhanced access they have to the scientific literature as members of the University community gave students techniques to be more focused and efficient. They quickly understood that the approach to any one database is transferable to others, and that all work of this type requires the skills of critical reading, analysis, and synthesis.

These skills were further emphasized during the peer review workshop that was offered just prior to assigning student reviewers to the submitted manuscripts. Developed in consultation with the University’s learning and writing specialists, the session covered the key aspects of the peer review process: it offered a critique exercise to help students develop familiarity with the assessment rubrics and gave them a chance to discuss how the rubrics could inform their approach to the reviews they were to perform. Once they learned that the rubrics provided the structure for critically reading their assigned manuscripts, and the criteria for assessing the content and presentation of ideas, they approached their tasks with confidence. As a result, their reviews provided specific, constructive, and timely feedback to their peers.

Assessment rubrics

As with most rubrics, the two we developed for NANO*1000 clearly define what constitutes work that is below expectations or meets, or exceeds them (Pritchard, 2010). Helpful in guiding the students in their own writing, they also provided support for reviewing their peers’ papers. Having an organized list of criteria by which their work would be assessed was
new for most of the students, but the clear descriptions of the performance indicators reassured them that the grading would not be a purely subjective matter. Rather, they reinforced the understanding of scientific approaches to knowledge-making as an enterprise integrating logical, objective measures of performance with empirical observation and quantitative expression of results (North, 1987).

The same held true for the instructors who marked the students’ papers and peer reviews. Though each had a practical sense of how to judge student performance based on years of university teaching experience, they were all encouraged by the development of the rubrics to be more explicit in articulating their expectations for the assignments and more consistent in assessing all the work the students submitted.

The rubrics also enabled the instructors and peer reviewers to provide the student authors with formative feedback on the original manuscript they submitted to the journal, without having to assign marks. Instead, the rubrics summarized the key points of the authors’ initial performances and provided them an opportunity to improve their writing in light of the reviewers’ comments and suggestions. They were also invited to consult with the writing specialists in the University’s Learning Commons before resubmitting their final, edited manuscripts. Knowing that they had multiple chances to improve their papers was very reassuring to our first-year authors, and removed some of the anxiety about the project.

**Timelines**

In our first offering of NANO*1000, the electronic journal project was introduced in the second half of the semester and occupied much of our students’ time. The process required them to do several things in a compressed period: define their own topics and have them approved by a course instructor (or choose a topic from an approved list); research, write, and submit their manuscripts to the online journal; participate in the double-blind, peer review process; edit their own papers in response to the reviews; and resubmit their edited manuscripts to the journal. It was these edited manuscripts that the course instructors assessed for grades. In this final review, the instructors also decided which, if any, of the manuscripts were worthy of publication. In the following semester, the successful manuscripts were copyedited and published.

**Moving Forward**

Entering the second iteration of NANO*1000 provided the opportunity to reflect upon last year’s experience. We realized that the supporting elements of the electronic journal project could be significantly enhanced by tightening their organization. The project was introduced earlier in the semester and the workshops and deadlines spread more purposefully throughout the semester. We added some shorter writing assignments that gave our students additional opportunities to practice their writing and to respond to critical feedback. Because of the interest attracted by the electronic journal among our colleagues at the University, its scope was broadened and the title changed from *Nanoscience B.Sc. Journal* to *da Vinci’s Notebook*. It is now available for use in any undergraduate course in the College.

The scope of *da Vinci’s Notebook* makes it appropriate for use only in undergraduate science programs at the University of Guelph, but the project itself, with its suite of pedagogical tools, can easily be adapted for use in other disciplines and at other institutions. The flexibility of OJS makes it possible to create any number of electronic journals, on any subject, and for any audience. Workshops to support student learning can be developed by instructors, either independently or in consultation with learning, writing, information and subject specialists on their own campuses. Similarly, rubrics can be customized to reflect the learning objectives of the course and the expectations of the instructors.

Our writing-in-the-sciences project continues to provide our first-year Nanoscience students with a unique, multifaceted writing experience, and to showcase the best examples of the class’s work through publication in a peer-reviewed electronic journal. At the end of the fall semester of this second academic year, all students completing the course re-
ceived a final grade that incorporated an assessment of their writing performance. Further, those students whose work was selected for publication are working individually with the University’s science writing specialist in the winter semester to develop their writing skills further and improve their manuscripts prior to publication.

The goal of introducing this electronic journal project into the introductory course of the University of Guelph’s undergraduate program in Nanoscience was twofold: to strengthen student engagement and enhance student literacy. The former is particularly important for first-year students, and the latter is uniquely important for science students. After its first year of being offered, the effort has resulted in observable improvements in both areas.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support and assistance of our many University of Guelph colleagues whose special expertise complemented the subject knowledge of the course instructors Dan Thomas and Detong Jiang; and the information research/management expertise of the College’s learning and curriculum support librarian, Peggy Pritchard. We wish to acknowledge the following people, in particular:

College of Physical and Engineering Sciences. Tony Vannelli (Dean), Paul Rowntree (Chemistry), and John Dutcher (Physics).

Library/Learning Commons. Wayne Johnston (Head, Research Enterprise and Scholarly Communications), Barbara Christian (Manager, Writing Services), Elizabeth Murison (former Science Writing Specialist), Margaret Hundleby (Science Writing Consultant), and Dale Lackeyram (Science Learning Specialist).

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Office of the Associate V.P. (Academic). Nancy Schmidt (Director, Learning and Pedagogy Initiatives).

References


Biographies

Peggy Pritchard has been supporting student learning and skill development since her graduation from McGill University in 1989 (M.L.I.S). Editor and co-author of a CIHR-funded mentoring manual for aspiring female scientists (2006, Elsevier Academic Press), she has been twice recognized for excellence in teaching (2002 Faculty of Health Sciences Teaching Award, Queen’s University; 2009 Academic Librarianship Award, University of Guelph Faculty Association). She works closely with faculty colleagues in the College of Physical and Engineering Science to develop and deliver innovative curricula to under-
graduate science students.

Dan Thomas completed his undergraduate degree at the University of Alberta, a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, and post-doctoral work at the University of Washington in Seattle. Since 1989, he has been a member of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Guelph and has recently served as Associate Dean Academic in the College of Physical and Engineering Science. He is pursuing research in both Nanoscience and science education and is helping to found the University of Guelph’s new “Institute for Science and Engineering Education Research” (iS-EER).
How do you know what students in your course “took away” with them? Why not ask? Through a learning portfolio assignment, I invited students to show: how they met the course objectives; connections they made to other courses as well as aspects of their lives; and their views and perspectives about the course material and processes. They were asked to include tangible evidence, examples, connections, and reflections from all class sessions, discussions, and other assignments. They were also required to express themselves through a creative variety of styles and formats, including a concept map and a world map. What were their reactions to the assignment? Many noted that it encouraged them to think critically and that it was a fun way to show the links between the course and their own lives. Might you like to use or adapt some or all parts of my learning portfolio assignment in a course (any discipline) that you teach? Through reading this paper and trying the described activities, you will have completed your own mini-learning portfolio and explored methods of assessment.1

It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education.

- Albert Einstein

Introduction

I became interested in the use of learning portfolios through several experiences related to connecting formal and informal learning. I learned many of the important skills I use today through informal, everyday practice and application (Cassidy, 2006a, 2007). Students I have interviewed feel that post-secondary institutions need to acknowledge the learning that takes place outside of credit courses (Cassidy, 2006b). I love teaching and have designed and taught both credit courses at the University of

1 If you are interested in templates and resources for use in your own courses, feel free to contact me at alice.cassidy@ubc.ca
British Columbia as well as many non-credit short lecture and field-based courses that people take for the love of the topic, with no grades or assignments. Hence, the mix of informal and formal learning has been very important to me both as a learner and as a teacher, and inspired me to offer these opportunities to my students as well.

In a course I taught for 14 years, I experimented with different kinds of assignments and in-class activities, sought student input through alumni advising teams, and in the last eight years of this course, assigned students a learning portfolio in lieu of a final exam. I share the templates I designed, and other aspects of this assignment with you so that you may use or adapt it for your own use.

What is a Learning Portfolio?

A learning portfolio is a collection of one’s work, often customized to show evidence of meeting particular goals or specific areas of development, learning, and growth. Learning portfolios can appear in hard copy or electronically. Some related terms include course portfolios (e.g., University of Nebraska Lincoln, 2009), professional portfolios (Bossers, Kernaghan, Hodgins, O’Connor, & Van Kessel, 1999), and experiential learning portfolios (Brown, 2002), all of which have been used, across disciplines, in a variety of contexts including K-12, post-secondary, and professional programs.

Learning portfolios have many valuable outcomes. Herring, Hibbs, Morgan, and Notar (2007) describe how student success and motivation for learning increase through the use of standards-based digital portfolios. Brown’s (2002) findings suggest that the development of a portfolio increases students’ understanding of “what, why, and how they learned” (p. 228), enhances their communication and organization skills, and reinforces the importance of reflection in learning. In my course, I introduce the learning portfolio assignment with the following definition (Cassidy, 2008):

Your personal version of the course, documenting your learning throughout the term (and briefly, what you will take away with you), and presented in creative, varied, and multi-linked ways that include tangible evidence, examples, connections and reflections, based on three key criteria.

Learning Portfolio Use in My Course

In my course, the learning portfolio assignment contributes to 35% of the final grade, with a one-page check-in assignment, worth 7%, handed in half-way through the term to provide formative feedback, and a 10-page final learning portfolio, worth 28%, due on the last day of term. In-class activities allow students to practise the kinds of mapping and charting expected in the learning portfolio.

To better explain how this (somewhat) complicated assignment works in my course, I modeled it below, and I invite you to try it out as if you were a student in my course. To make it most helpful to you, I have adapted the topic and simplified the tasks.

Your Mini Learning Portfolio Assignment

Topic: Getting the most out of the next conference you attend

Part 1: Setting two of your own goals/objectives

What is the next conference you are planning to attend? Think about why you registered for and are attending it. What do you hope to achieve, or get out of it? It costs money and your valuable time. How do you hope to make that time and money well spent, for you personally and/or professionally?

Your two goals/objectives will be the basis for your mini learning portfolio project. You will need one blank sheet of paper. I suggest you fold your sheet in half, lengthways, so that you have a long writing space with room for columns. Write your first Goal/Objective on the left side, in the top ‘half’, and other one in the lower ‘half’, also on the left. You will be adding more columns. Having described this suggested format, if you
prefer to go ‘free-form’, this can work too.

Here are a few examples that you might borrow, build upon, or be inspired by to write your own. Aim for two Goals/Objectives for now; you might have more that you can add later:

- Collect new ideas and strategies by attending sessions on topics related to my key area of practice.
- Be actively engaged in teaching and learning techniques by choosing sessions that are described as such (and hope they do what they say).
- Increase my network of colleagues by meeting as many people as I can during all parts of the conference.

**Part 2: Other sections to add**

You may wish to add column for each section, or create it in more of a free-form diagram:

- Sessions to attend (sub-heading: topics, facilitators, or what institution from).
- Notes to self during unstructured time (sub-heading: receptions, breaks, banquet, other).
- My area/topics of work/study/other (optional: what you really want! e.g. attend a session just because it looks enjoyable).
- ‘Wild card’ - an extra section for whatever comes up. You might know what other section(s) you need, you might not know yet, or you might not need any more.

You have just created your own version of what I give my students. Though, there are differences: in my course, I state the objectives in the syllabus; I give students some suggested titles for columns that I think would help them meet the three criteria for the assignment; I email the students a template chart that they can use as is, or adapt as they wish; and in-class activities and discussions focus on these very aspects, so that students are able to work on their learning portfolio during class time, to ask questions and to receive feedback.

**Concept Maps as a Visual Tool**

You can also organize the chart you have just created using concept maps. Instructions on how you can try to create a concept map, using a familiar example, are listed below:

- You will need a blank piece of paper.
- Print the key term ‘house’ in the middle of the map and circle it.
- Identify certain parts of a house (e.g., room, kitchen, roof, garden, or front door). Each of these is a new term. Circle each term you add. (If you stop now, many would call what you have a mind map.)
- Draw an arrow between related terms, and note, above or beneath each arrow, what the connection is. The arrow may move in one or both directions.
- Add more explanatory arrows as needed to describe, as best as you can, how all the terms you have added are related.

You have just drawn a simple concept map, showing key terms and how they are interconnected. If you were to show the concept map you just created to a colleague who did the same thing, how similar do you think they would be? Concept maps are thought to be powerful learning tools. They closely mirror the process of “thinking and learning” (Cassidy, Nakonechny, & Griffiths, 2001). Because of this, it is a skill that is transferable to any situation where the creative processing of ideas is required. As you know, in any complex situation there is usually not one correct answer. Hence, concept maps can be very unique. There are also many ways to create them, including as a flow chart from the top down, or as a tree from the roots up, or, as we did just now, starting in the centre and radiating out.

In Figure 1 (an example from my course, with permission to use granted by the student who...
created it), humans are at the centre of the concept map, with connections, explained on the arrows, to various topics explored during the course. Some connecting topics, such as community service-learning, in the bottom left, and the subtopic, biodiversity, in the top left, are then depicted using their own unique cycles of terms and arrows.

In my course, students create concept maps as part of their 10-page learning portfolio assignments. They also include word-image diagrams, world maps, and a variety of other methods to synthesize a large amount of material and make connections as described by the assignment criteria. Figures 2 and 3 (with permission to use granted by the students who created them) show two such examples, including a leaf metaphor and a Venn diagram.

Start a concept map for yourself, based on the writing in your chart from above. I invite you to keep adding to your concept map and/or your chart.

Assessing Learning Portfolios

I designed a checklist rubric, in the form of a chart, to assess my students’ learning portfolios. Each row on the chart represented an individual student. Columns represent each of the three main criteria (coverage, links, and variety of styles) for the assignment, which are worth approximately 33% each. I subdivide “coverage” into columns for each of the classes’ topics. As I review each portfolio, I could check off whether it was there or not, and note with an asterisk where the level of work was particularly high; by drawing lines between cells, I could also indicate the links students made. Using this technique, I could review and compare how well each student met the

Figure 1
Example of a Concept Map
Figure 2
Example of a Word Diagram Using a Leaf Metaphor

Figure 3
Example of a Venn Diagram
criteria for the assignment, and determine the final mark. The overall mark for this assignment is not derived simply by adding up the columns. The concept, the “whole is greater than the sum of the parts,” applies here. Giving students a lot of informal and formal feedback throughout the term was essential.

I assess the mid-term check-in (one page of the learning portfolio) similarly, in order to give students an idea of what they are doing well and how they could improve for the final assignment. In past years, I invited students to practise self and peer-assessment during class time. This technique might work well for summative assessment in large classes.

Barrett (2007) underscores the need to pay particular attention to the difference between assessment for learning and assessment of learning. Though concept maps and learning portfolios, at a glance, may seem challenging to assess, I found that the key is to break them down into the criteria you set for your students, then methodically go through each one in turn. You may find that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts and need to find a way to acknowledge extra effort or holistic value as well. Other examples of assessment techniques can be found in such works as Stoddart, Abrams, Gasper, and Canaday (2000), and Nicoll, Francisco, and Nakhleh (2001).

Concluding Remarks

From eight years of inviting my students to create learning portfolios as a final course assignment, I found that they valued the experience very much – the creativity of it; the way it valued not only how they showed their understanding of key concepts of the course, but how it valued connections they made between courses, or other formal and informal learning experiences; and other aspects of their lives. I wonder if, as educators, we sometimes lose track of the tension that students can feel between their every-day lived experience and academic courses, and the disconnect they feel moving from course to course. It is my hope that asking students to identify these very connections in their learning portfolios facilitates students’ understanding of the place of the course within their lives. I invite you to try using this approach and, upon request by email, will happily send you templates and other material I used so that you can use or adapt it for your own teaching context.

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Course Syllabus, Zoology Department, Faculty of Science, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.


Biography

Alice Cassidy, Ph.D., is Associate Director of the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth (TAG) and Leader of the Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at the University of British Columbia. A biologist by academic training, her work focuses on active teaching and learning. She most enjoys designing learning activities that trigger the curiosity and creativity that dwells inside each of us.
Section II

IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY
This paper examines information portrayed on Canadian educational development (ED) centre websites and, in particular, whether information that corresponds to questions compiled from a literature search of ED centre practices is readily available from centre websites. This study phase is part of a larger national study of Canadian educational development centres’ practices.

The Seascape: An Overview

Researchers in the UK (Gosling, 2001, 2006) and US (Lewis, 1996) have outlined the historical growth of faculty development. Elrick (1990) discussed conditions that led to Canadian educational development (ED) initiatives; Donald (1986), Wilcox (1997), and Scarfe (2004) chronicled the history of Canadian ED centre growth; and Mindorff, Ratkovic, and Babady-Bila (2004) mapped the activities of 42 centres across Canada. However, there is limited literature available on the practices of Canadian ED units.

The Educational Developers Caucus (EDC) ED Profiler (2004-2005) is now significantly out of date. While the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) website (www.stlhe.ca/en/links/teaching_centre.php) lists 34 Canadian teaching centres, only links to ED centres are provided; there is no database for information comparison. In addition, there are more than 63 centres at post-secondary institutions in Canada. A complete list that includes colleges is available through the University of Waterloo at www.uwaterloo.ca/canu/index.php, but this provides links to institutions rather than educational development centres. Kreber and Brook’s (2001) assertion that there remains a need to map the current Canadian landscape of ED centres

1 Many thanks to the Educational Developers Caucus for funding to support this work. I also owe debts of thanks to the following colleagues who, while not involved in writing this article, contributed to the literature review and data collection and have been instrumental in moving the project forward: Alice Cassidy, Martha Crealock, Chris Groeneboer, Erika Kustra, Jolyn Lee, Alice Macpherson, Michael Potter, Ruth Rodgers, Anne Scrimger, Margaret Wilson, and Janet Z-K Wolstenholme.
and their practices holds true. Accordingly, our collaborative national study set out to describe the practices of Canadian post-secondary (university and college) ED centres, with the intention of gathering and compiling sharable information to be made available on the EDC website.

In turning to centre websites to compile some of this data, certain trends became apparent about what we communicate on our websites and perhaps more importantly, what we do not. The purpose of this paper is therefore to discuss those trends and what falls “between the tides.” In it, I discuss the nature and purpose of ED websites as communication tools: What are we communicating, to whom, and for what purpose?

Currents: Background to the Study Questions

While this paper outlines the kinds of information that are available on ED websites, some background on how the study questions were compiled may be useful. David Gosling (UK), who has been collecting information on ED centres internationally, was a useful initial contact; his helpful summaries provided a strong starting point for questions to guide the data collection. In addition, the research team compiled a summary of relevant literature, particularly Canadian sources. We used an online platform (Sharepoint) for our discussion as we developed our list of questions from this body of work. The resulting 39 data collection questions (see Table 1) were developed from Carusetta and Cranton, 2005; Cox, 2002; Gosling, 2001, 2006; Konrad, 1983; Kreaden, 2001; Lawlor and King, 2003; Scarfe, 2004; and Wilcox, 1997, 1998.

Floating on the Sea: Data Collection

Initially we compiled data from our own centres in response to the question list. This pilot phase allowed us to assess our original list of questions, and it was clear that 39 questions would prove an onerous list for any centre to address. In addition, we found some overlap and a need for further clarity before we could reasonably ask others to contribute to the database.

We asked our research assistant to chart our initial responses and look at the data we had already compiled and confirm which of it was available through the centre websites. While we knew it was unlikely that all 39 questions could be answered online, and that our next step (currently in progress) would be to go back to those centres to confirm and add to the collected data, some very interesting results became apparent from the online searches. In the next section, I discuss those findings.

Waves: What is on the Websites and What is Not?

The initial web search included seven post-secondary institutions, in each case the home institution of a member of the research group for this phase of the study. These were Durham College/OUIT, Guelph University, McMaster University, Mount Allison University, Mount Royal College, University of Waterloo, and University of Windsor.

What became very interesting were the apparent trends in what was readily available, partially available, and apparently not available on ED websites. Table 1 indicates the total number of institutions from our pilot study group (n=7) that fell into each of these three categories.

S.O.S.: Discussion of Findings

What becomes apparent in examining this chart is that as individual staff we hold a great deal more information about our centres than we post on our websites. That may be intentional, in that websites represent the messages we choose to portray and as such are necessarily distilled. It is worth noting, however, the number of topics where our portrayed information is incomplete or missing, and that only in “name of centre” do we achieve a perfect score.

I suggest that we have three main commu-
## Table 1

**Website Availability of Responses to Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Level 1 Information available</th>
<th>Level 2 Information partially available or hard to find*</th>
<th>Level 3 Information does not seem to be on web</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Name of unit (including previous names, dates of change) note not all show historical names.</td>
<td>7**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. History – when established, length of time in current form.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Amalgamated with other units? Now? In past?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staff – full-time, part-time, job titles, academic qualifications? (e.g., degrees). Time in role?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Role of head of unit (title, position within institution).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Physical location on campus.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Role, expected activities.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Organizational status, reporting lines, links to other departments?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mission statement? Stated goals?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Interaction of faculty with centre as ‘helpers’ (leading programs, committees, etc).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Activities – noting whether any are shared responsibility with other units.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Activities of greatest impact (and how is impact assessed?)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Contribute to institutional strategy development on teaching and learning? In what way?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Report to academic community on activities?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. E-learning development role.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Other teaching development related departments at institution? Collaboration?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Mandatory programs? All voluntary attendance?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Collect statistics on activities?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Partly available indicated that not all data provided by the centre was found on their website.

** n=7
nities to whom we communicate: faculty, staff, and students within our own institutions, administrators within our own institutions, and other ED centres. I acknowledge that there may be other groups, but I will focus in this section on considerations for these three.

Institution: Faculty, staff, students
Arguably, our websites exist to inform our academic communities what we do and how we do that work. Regrettably, the evidence suggests we may not be achieving that aim. For example, in Q6 (physical location on campus), Q7, and Q11 (our activities) information is remarkably incomplete. Certainly centres may argue that much of this information is available online, but I suggest it is primarily available to those who already know what they are looking for and where to look. Could someone who does not know your campus find your centre based on the website information?

Institution: Administrators
While administrators need to know about our specific activities and mission and goals, they also need
to know about the impact our activities have, and they need easy access to this information when making funding decisions. For example, as a group, we could be doing a better job of communicating how we assess the impact of our work (Q12), and policies and innovations developed (Q35 & Q36). In tough economic times, it is troublesome that we miss the opportunity to educate administrators about what we do, and we fall short on communicating statistics about our work (Q19). We could use our websites powerfully to our advantage: articulating a response to how we are evaluated (Q39) could in fact help us guide this process.

Other ED centres
I believe we have a responsibility to provide information that will be useful to our discipline colleagues. A recent search of 12 Canadian universities to compile scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) grants and amounts showed that very little of this information was available on centre websites, much was difficult to find, and in many cases website information was out of date. It is in our own interest that we provide information that we and others will find useful.

I wish to make a special plea for communicating SoTL information on our websites. This is a powerful and growing area of inquiry in post-secondary settings: not communicating our work ultimately can inhibit growth in this area. In addition, in research-intensive settings, SoTL can open conversations. There is also much to be gained by making explicit our support for research in teaching and learning (Q38) and on what literature we draw to inform our work (Q32).

Lifejackets: Strategies for Website Improvement
These are but a few examples where our websites could benefit from greater clarity. Within our group and at conference presentations we have begun to discuss strategies for better communicating ED work via our websites. Suggestions have included:

- post year end reports;
- organize the website by services available rather than by staff;
- organize the website as responses to FAQ;
- include achievements of people we have worked with to show impact of our work on others;
- consult other sites for exemplars;
- build websites for others (use post-its with what we want on site, arrange as a template, ask those outside the centre to re-arrange the template); and,
- given the importance of communication and how much time is involved in updating sites, hire someone to manage it.

Message in a Bottle: Codicil and Conclusions
This paper may seem to present a negative view of ED centre websites, and that is not our intention. The compiled questions do not necessarily represent areas around which centres have designed their websites. In addition, while the trends in the data are interesting and may serve to inform ED centres undertaking website and strategic planning review, clearly there is a need to add the additional data we have collected from 35 other centres to see if these patterns hold. We will of course return to our primary study purpose of compiling responses to all questions from as many Canadian ED centres as we can and will be posting a searchable database to the EDC website. A spreadsheet can be compiled to any who request it.

As website renewal is an ongoing process, we also recognize our chart is likely already out of date and perhaps the ship has already sailed. However, the trends it represents are compelling and will hopefully encourage centres to consider areas that represent opportunities for charting a course to making our work more explicit.
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Donald, J.G. (1986). *An inventory of programs, courses, and other forms of pedagogical training of higher education personnel in Canada: Report to the European Centre for Higher Education*. Montreal, PQ: Centre for University Teaching and Learning, McGill University, Montreal, QC.


Biography

Nicola Simmons is the Research and Evaluation Consultant at the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) at the University of Waterloo. Her scholarly interests include educational development, scholarship of teaching and learning, and reflective practice.
Introduction

Among the featured pre-conference workshops at the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) Conference was *Paddle Your Own Canoe*. Inspired by the conference theme *Between the Tides*, the facilitators’ intention was to explore the power of metaphor for teaching and learning in higher education, using canoeing as a concrete example. Although metaphors are often employed in teaching and learning settings, instructors are seldom afforded the opportunity to explore the multiple meanings of metaphors *in situ* and with colleagues in a cross-disciplinary setting. The workshop leaders also set out to harness the power of concrete experience *beyond four walls*, reflection, conceptualization, and further experimentation as key elements of the morning’s cycle of learning (Kolb, 1984).¹ Field trips

¹ For those unfamiliar with it, Kolb’s experiential learning cycle suggests four stages in learning, occurring cyclically: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization of what has been experienced, and the application of that conceptualization to a new round of activity, resulting in increasingly rich and refined understandings emerging from experience.
and outdoor experiences are important, enriching elements of a holistic student learning and research experience (Tompkins, 1996, as cited in “Service Learning,” 2009), and the facilitators predicated their workshop design on the notion that instructors can also benefit from this educational model as an integral part of their own professional development.

The Role of Metaphors

A scan of the literature on metaphors provides perspective on their general use since antiquity, their ubiquitous presence in many contexts in modern society, and their many and varied applications in classrooms and in teacher training and professional development.

A metaphor is defined as “a way of speaking in which one thing is expressed in terms of another, whereby this bringing together throws new light on the character of what is described” (Gorden, 1978, as cited in Gassner, 1999).

Historically, the metaphor can be found as “an effective tool” in the Bible, ancient Greek myths, and children’s fairy tales. Further, metaphor has been used “to inspire, to make sophisticated theory more understandable, and to develop skill acquisition” (Gorden, 1978, as cited in Gassner, 1999). The approach has been adopted by coaches and leaders as well as teachers and scholars. The metaphor, then, as a “mental construction that helps us to structure our experience and to develop our imagination and reasoning” can be considered “pervasive in our daily life” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). Using metaphor can help us bring structure and meaning to our life and work experiences in what Johnson (1987) calls an “embodied schema” or an “image schema” (p. 29-30). Sfard (1994) sees the purpose of metaphor as providing a link between our concrete, lived experience and our abstract thought, breathing life into our imagination (as cited in Lim, 1999).

According to many authors, metaphors are an integral part of our daily life. How are they used in teaching and how can they be used in the professional development of teachers and university professors? Gassner (1999) notes that metaphors can be used in teaching to “make comparisons, to connect new concepts by more familiar ones, and just to be more creative to explain a theory, a concept, a philosophy.” As one can imagine, there are myriad uses of the metaphor in the classroom, the lecture hall, and even in the laboratory. But the main interest of this paper is to explore the use of metaphors about teaching and the metaphors for teaching as seen by the teachers themselves. According to Thornbury (1991), “teachers, like other professionals, resort to and depend on the use of metaphor when it comes to verbalizing their experience: metaphors help them to see what is visible, to describe what otherwise would be indescribable” (p. 193). What is more, according to McDonald (1986), using a metaphor for our teaching “affects how we self-evaluate and revise our own pedagogy from year to year and from moment to moment.”

A fascinating study of school teachers in Greece shed light on the metaphors commonly used to describe teaching in their context. The Greeks variously saw their roles as “gardener,” “guide,” “coach,” “acrobat,” “maestro,” “cook,” “sculptor,” “locksmith,” and surprisingly frequently, “flying a kite!” (Kasoutas & Malamitsa, 2009). The study in question concludes that the application of metaphor has great promise as a way to gain understanding and insight into one’s teaching as well as the practice of others in the profession. It also raises the difficulties associated with the use of metaphors such as widely varying interpretations by different researchers, ambiguities and problematic levels of abstraction (Glucksberg et al., 1992 as cited in Kasoutas & Malamitsa, 2009; Lim 1999). This is an interesting qualification, but a full analysis of the limitations of the use of metaphor with teachers and university professors is beyond the scope of this essay.

Paddle Your Own Canoe: Testing the Waters

The authors of this essay led the canoeing workshop designed to explore canoeing as a metaphor for teaching. Placed into small teams, the teacher-participants were invited to explore specific aspects of canoeing as
illustrated and described in an amusing and highly effective canoeing manual published in Canada in 1948 by R. H. Perry. The four small groups were given laminated copies of illustrations – a sampling of which appear on these pages, and asked to draw parallels between quite specific aspects of canoeing and elements of their college and university teaching lives. After an hour of canoeing and chatting, the participants beached the canoes and presented their reflections to members of the large group. Some examples of their thoughts follow.

One group was challenged to compare how to get in – and out of a canoe with certain aspects of teaching. On a sheet of instructions that accompany the sketch (Figure 1) provided, they were asked to “Prepare a five-minute presentation on this aspect of paddling as a metaphor for teaching.” As was the case with all groups, the professors in group one were invited to consider making their point by choosing to “deliver a lecture, hold class, facilitate a seminar, make a group presentation, tell a story, perform a skit, develop a role play, engage in a conversation, describe or act out a critical incident, or employ any other strategy…to help your perspective come to life” (workshop materials, June 17, 2009).

The instruction sheet informed group one that: “As a paddler, it is important for you to learn the procedures for getting into and out of the canoe in a variety of circumstances…(t)here are a number of considerations for paddlers to be aware of if they are to enjoy successful outings and avoid mishap both for their canoes and for themselves in departing and in returning at the end of the excursion” (workshop materials, June 17, 2009). Although the workshop leaders expected group one to draw the parallels of getting into a lecture and closing a lecture, getting into the subject matter at the beginning of a term and wrapping up a semester, the group took a different approach. Team members decided to demonstrate the various ways one could go about teaching the concept of effective entry and exit of a canoe as an indication of the pedagogical choices they face every day in their teaching practice. The first team member proposed the experiential approach, noting it was the approach used in the workshop, whereby participants were invited to board the canoes with little or no prior instruction. A second team member mimicked a staid professor who emphasized the importance of a background lecture on the history of the canoe as a pre-requisite to teaching proper entry and exit techniques. A third team member illustrated the anecdotal method, recounting to the assembled learners how she had found it important to step into the middle of the canoe and to keep a low centre of gravity. A fourth team member stressed the importance of appealing to the emotional side of learning, inviting personal reflections on entry and exits and encouraging the use of learning logs.

The members of a second group were invited to examine a page of illustrations featuring notes of

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2 Reprinted from *The Canoe and You* (p. 18), by R. H. Perry, 1948, Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
caution for *hunters and fishermen* using canoes for their outdoor sporting pursuits (Figure 2). The notes suggested that, just as canoeists must take special precautions in these circumstances, teachers would be well advised to take care in the pursuit of their classroom duties. The group two participants came up with the following parallels:

- just as it is important not to overload a canoe, it is important not to overload your class with information;
- just as it is important for canoeists to “keep a weather eye cocked for storms and early darkness” it is important for some teachers to avoid their tendency to become complacent and therefore miss warning signs of pedagogical pitfalls and, for other teachers, to be unaware of storm clouds brewing because of nervousness and a lack of confidence in the classroom;
- just as wearing heavy clothing in the late fall and early spring could represent potential danger for canoeists, teachers risk getting “bogged down” in the oppression of overload at the end of the fall and winter terms and certain students may have too much work/learning to accomplish at the end of a session; and
- just as paddlers should carry an extra paddle in the canoe, teachers should pack an extra tool when going to class, and be aware of the options for “extra paddles” in the pedagogical repertoire.

The two remaining groups applied lessons regarding proper stroking techniques, rescue readiness, and the importance of timing, rhythm, and pacing to the higher education setting. In the debriefing, the Small Craft Aquatic Centre instructor also contributed to the ongoing conversation, drawing a parallel between the “initial stability” of conventional pleasure canoes for beginners and the predictability/limits of conventional teaching as contrasted with the “secondary stability” of the sleeker canoe design, one which allows eventual greater performance and freedom of movement for the paddler just as learning-centred pedagogy leads to greater student autonomy over time.

**Figure 2**

> A FEW NOTES FOR HUNTERS AND FISHERMEN

- Overloading is always dangerous
- Keep a weather eye cocked for storms and early darkness
- In early spring and late fall never forget these dangers

- I’ve saved many lives, heavy boots should always be loosened when worn in a boat.
- Extra paddles should always be loosened when worn in a boat.
- Remember that you have to get back by boat

**Personal Metaphors for Teaching**

After the conference, the workshop facilitators contacted the participants by e-mail to ask them if they used metaphors as a way of thinking about their teaching. Participants subsequently identified cycling, rock-climbing, cooking, gardening, and geocaching as metaphors they had adopted for teaching on higher education. The authors have worked with the brief descriptions of these metaphors submitted by professors from British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario to add to the canoeing metaphor, which served as the basis for the workshop (See Appendix A).

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1 Reprinted from *The Canoe and You* (p. 35), by R. H. Perry, 1948, Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.
Conclusion

The authors set out to provide university and college professors with a unique active learning setting to explore canoeing as a metaphor for teaching and learning in higher education. In so doing, the workshop facilitators hoped to stimulate reflection on approaches to teaching in a challenging and collaborative environment. Nearly twenty men and women, including freshly-minted PhDs, mid-career professors and senior faculty, and possessing highly varied experience levels as paddlers, eagerly took the plunge (although not, thankfully, literally) along the banks of the St. John River in New Brunswick. They reportedly enjoyed the setting, the outing, the dialogue, and the opportunity to use their imaginations and to express their ideas about teaching in an outdoor environment. An academic at Duke University suggests that conducting class beyond the confines of campus can “interrupt…the programming of classroom conditioning” and stimulate a more holistic educational process (Tompkins, 1996, as cited in “Service Learning,” 2009). Does this benefit apply to the ongoing professional development of teaching faculty? The authors of this article contend that it does.

What further lessons did the authors derive from their venture into the out-of-doors to explore the application of metaphors to teaching in higher education? Many of the lessons are a variation of the lessons of more traditional workshops writ large. First and foremost, off-site workshops require detailed and long-term planning and the support of specialists who operate and rent equipment and facilities. Second, a site visit is essential prior to the activity. Third, participants may be required to sign waivers at the site. Fourth, videotaped recordings of the event, especially of the small group presentations, can provide valuable and more precise tracking of visual and oral contributions for follow-up and written accounts (such as the present essay). Fifth, we are reminded that activities do not always go as smoothly as planned and that the level of physical, emotional, psychological, and inter-personal risk are greater both for participants and for the facilitators in less conventional learning settings. Although there were no major mishaps, the facilitators would fine-tune the planning of several aspects of the activity in future iterations to minimize certain unnecessary difficulties.

Finally, a three-hour workshop, although valuable and even memorable unto itself, is likely to have a greater impact if participants are drawn in to further reflection, reading, writing, and active dialogue on the subject at hand in the months to follow the activity.

References


McDonald, A. (1986). Metaphor, self-image and

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4 A participant fell (without injury) when a canoe was pulled up a slippery embankment. Workshop leaders could have been more conscious of ability and experience when canoe pairs were formed.

Perry, R.H. (1948). The canoe and you. Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd.


Biographies

W. Alan Wright is Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, at the University of Windsor. The role of educational developers in fostering student success in higher education is one focus of his research interests.

Marie-Jeanne Monette is a research assistant at the University of Windsor. Her field of research is the success and perseverance of students in post-secondary studies.

Beverley Hamilton is the Assistant to the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, at the University of Windsor, Ontario. Her pedagogical research interests include the use of metaphor as a tool for reflective practice, the role of narrative identity in teaching and learning, and collaborative approaches to institutional change.
Appendix A

Original Metaphors for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Components of the activity</th>
<th>Parallels in teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cycling           | - Plan your cycling route  
                   - Unexpected change in wind direction  
                   - Adjust to conditions  
                   - Keep the flow  
                   - Mental and physical challenge and reward  
                   - Self-fulfilment | - Plan your lesson  
                   - Unexpected developments with class  
                   - Adapt with student feedback and colleague support  
                   - Exhilaration, clarity and purpose  
                   - Seek solace in balance of challenge and reward  
                   - Self-fulfilment |
| Geocaching        | - Planning phase (how to get to the general site by road and hiking route)  
                   - Finding hidden containers by using hints and GPS coordinates  
                   - Assessment (find the cache or not found)  
                   - Record your find and have a permanent record  
                   - Start with limited information  
                   - Get feedback during the hunt | - Course planning  
                   - Problem-base-learning pedagogy/active learning  
                   - Assessment  
                   - Student engagement (Recording your self-assessment with comments)  
                   - Constructing curriculum knowledge to reach and end learning goal  
                   - Formative feedback during semester |
| Cooking, Serving, Eating | - Spoon feeding  
                   - Prepare something interesting and tasty  
                   - Put the ingredients together  
                   - Serve appropriate amounts  
                   - Give the time to chew and digest before the next serving  
                   - Relation of trust between the cook and the diner  
                   - Chefs who truly love their craft and bring joy to the occasion  
                   - Fresh content  
                   - Awareness of allergies and preferences  
                   - A variety of dishes to satisfy various palates | - Eliminate choices for students  
                   - Prepare interesting lessons  
                   - How we will deliver the material, subject, lesson  
                   - Right amount of information  
                   - Give students time to comprehend the material before giving more  
                   - Trust between professor and students  
                   - Show that you love your subject and teaching  
                   - Up to date material  
                   - Know your students; background, learning styles  
                   - Variety of teaching styles to accommodate different learning styles |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rock Climbing</th>
<th>Guidance, support, freedom to learn:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Not pulled up the wall nor left to free fall but just enough rope to explore freely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Readjustment and changing of approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success comes from:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reaching higher than the day before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Triumph of figuring the route out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hard work to grasp new heights.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gardening</th>
<th>Guidance, support, freedom to learn:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teaching to give students space to learn on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adjusting and changing if necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success comes from:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Looking to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Finding solution and better ways to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Students must apply themselves to reach new levels of understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Plan your garden
- Take into account the seasons
- Respond to the weather
- Adjust to soil conditions
- Plant
- Remove weeds
- Harvest
- Eat the produce

- Plan your course or lesson
- Take into account the broader context and climate
- Respond to conditions and developments
- Making pedagogical decisions based on students characteristics
- Stimulate intellectual curiosity and growth through questioning, signposts to information, etc.
- Eliminate misconceptions and flawed understandings
- Reap benefits of teaching and learning
- Find intellectual and emotional nourishment as outcomes of teaching

The authors wish to acknowledge the contributions of the following workshop participants who submitted their personal metaphors for teaching: Natasha Kenny, University of Guelph (cycling); Gary Hunt, Thompson Rivers University, (geocaching); Billy Strean, University of Alberta (cooking, serving, eating); Carolyn Hoessler, Queen’s University (rock climbing); and Alice Macpherson, Kwantlen Polytechnic University (gardening).
Professional development programs for teaching assistants (TAs) at Canadian universities run the gamut from occasional workshops to complete certificate programs. Until recently, the Learning and Teaching Centre at the University of Victoria (UVic) typified this general format with a well-crafted TA program consisting of professional development workshops, annual conferences, and programs leading to certificates. When I was appointed to the newly formed role of TA Training Program Coordinator in the summer of 2008 (now a permanent role on campus), my immediate goal was to set up campus-wide programs to ensure that all TAs on campus had access to structured professional development programs that suited their needs and the needs of faculty and staff in a variety of disciplines, and took into consideration the changes occurring for TAs in today’s academic world.

To grasp an understanding of UVic’s TA climate (I did have some understanding due to my previous work at the Learning and Teaching Centre for three years as a TA Associate, as well as being a TA myself during my graduate work in the Department of Anthropology), I arranged one-on-one meetings with chairs and/or graduate advisors from each department on campus to talk about TA needs and departmental expectations. These conversations generated the potential for several collaborative projects based on departments’ individual and collective needs. In this paper, I first discuss the process and outcomes from the conversations and conclude with preliminary discussion about one of the collaborative projects that developed alongside and grew from these conversations regarding TA professional development.

Getting to Know You...

Throughout the fall of 2008 I met with either the
chair or graduate advisor (or sometimes both) in 40 of the 42 departments on UVic’s campus. For each meeting I had a set of questions that were discussed (Appendix A). The outcome from these conversations provided direction as to the needs of each department in order to facilitate the professional development of TAs at UVic. The TA population at UVic in any given semester is typically around 600 (except during the summer term). Each department varies in the number of TAs employed but a typical sampling consists of only a few TAs in departments such as Greek and Roman Studies to as many as 50 in departments such as Chemistry and Computer Science. The majority of departments identified two important campus-wide needs: a strong focus on TA professional development, and that this professional development is discipline-specific and targets issues identified as important to the department. At that time, less than half of the departments had some form of TA professional development (Appendix A, Question 5) in place, either in the form of a short orientation (9), guidance through the course instructor (7), or a specific graduate course about teaching in their discipline (3).

Departments identified that the duties (Appendix A, Question 15) TAs were mostly engaged with were grading (23), leading labs/tutorials (22), and administrative duties, which included holding office hours (22); administrative duties and office hours are grouped because the majority of departments acknowledged that TAs typically took care of some of their administrative duties during office hours. When specifically asked what training (Appendix A, Question 21) TAs needed to complete these duties efficiently, instruction was requested on communication (11), teaching (10), grading (6), professional behaviour (6), and time management (6). These results comply with the Professional Skills Development for Graduate Students (2008) report from the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies. The report identifies the following skills as the most pertinent and doable for universities to implement for the professional development of graduate students: communication, management, teaching, and research ethics.

Now That We Know You...

Conversations with each department provided a solid base in which to plan and improve the TA professional development offerings at UVic. The information gathered, combined with previous feedback from participants, led to the following changes: restructuring of conference events and workshops to directly address the identified needs of TAs and departments, increasing the number of TA professional development workshops offered per month from one to at least two or three, conversion of the mammoth TA Manual into digestible quick reference sheets called TA Tip Sheets, and revamping of the program about university teaching. The new certificate program is called the Professional Development Program in University Teaching.

However, the largest project that has grown alongside this restructuring has been the pilot of a new program titled Teaching Assistant Consultants (TACs). It was decided that the program would be a pilot so that we could research and evaluate it before considering taking it campus wide. The initiation of this program at UVic aims to benefit all parties involved: undergraduates, TAs, departments, and their members. The director of the Learning and Teaching Centre, Teresa Dawson, brings her experience to the project, having initiated similar programs during her time as a graduate student at Pennsylvania State University and later at University of California, Los Angeles. Teresa was able to see the value and effect of such programs and wanted to share this excellent program with the community at UVic. My role was to help craft a program, with Teresa’s support, that would suit the culture at UVic. During my conversations with department representatives, I explained different options for collaboration between departments and the Learning and Teaching Centre in order to increase TA confidence and professional skill development. Collaborative projects suggested included the TAC pilot program, my attendance at their graduate orientations to showcase TA professional development events that take place at the Learning and Teaching Centre, and/or bringing some of those workshops directly into the department. Over one third (17) of the departments were
interested in participating in the TAC pilot program, which indicated strong support for such a program at UVic. Departments that did not want to participate at this time cited reasons such as extremely small departments where such a model would not logistically work, to reluctance to position a TA as a “head” TA.

I refer to the development of this program as collaborative because of how its’ structure evolved and emerged, and due to how the TAC role demonstrates in many ways, collaboration. For my purposes, I take the definition for collaboration as expressed by Pat Parrott (n.d.) to imply a common working relationship, where each party involved is engaged in common goals and share all resources, responsibility for ensuring the delivery of a quality product, accountability for the outcomes, and finally, respect for the expertise that each person brings to their collaborative role. The creation of the TAC role at UVic involved an idea for a role to fill a recognized void on campus that was then shared with the majority of departments on campus. These conversations informed how the roles and responsibilities of the TAC developed, as well as delineation of how the Learning and Teaching Centre and the department would support the newly formed TAC role throughout the year. From inception, the TAC role at UVic has been one of collaboration, which is perpetuated through the TAC’s role in his/her home department between faculty, staff, and TAs.

What is a Teaching Assistant Consultant (TAC)?

A teaching assistant consultant is essentially a mentor – identified as a formal mentoring role since the TAC is appointed in that position, as opposed to an informal mentoring role, which is when a mentoring relationship happens naturally (Anibas, Brenner, & Zorn, 2009). The TAC mentors TAs in the home department by providing support in the form of discipline-specific workshops, one-on-one consultations, and fosters a TA community that encourages discussion about learning and teaching in their discipline; similar roles exist at other Canadian Universities, in particular York University’s Teaching Development Graduate Assistant (TDGA) program (Force, 2009). Each TAC for the 2009-2010 year was nominated by their department, based on the recognition of the candidate’s interest in teaching and learning in higher education, and their demonstrated skills and experience in related roles, such as a departmental TA. The following is taken from the TAC Roles and Responsibilities document:

This individual should be a senior graduate student with considerable teaching experience and demonstrated teaching excellence who would be likely to garner the respect of other TAs and be capable of serving in a mentoring capacity. The TAC reports to the Learning and Teaching Centre TA Training Program Coordinator and is responsible for liaising with the Graduate Advisor (or designate) in his/her home department to ensure the smooth running of services for TAs there.

TACs were required to attend 16 hours of specially designed seminars at the Learning and Teaching Centre about learning and teaching during the month of May and June. The seminars were modeled after the train-the-trainer format. This format dictates that the seminars given by the TA Training Program Coordinator model different teaching strategies so that the TACs experience different ways of presenting material that could then be used for the TA departmental seminars. Each TAC was required to deliver eight hours of instruction in the form of TA seminars in his/her home department during the fall and/or winter/spring semesters of 2009/2010. In total, TACs were allotted 75 hours to attend the Learning and Teaching Centre seminars, set up their departmental seminars, attend graduate orientations, and be available for TAs as needs surfaced. Additionally, TACs were charged with trying to foster a TA community in the home department, which has been identified as crucial for the success of such a program (Force, 2009). Besides departmental potlucks and other forms of establishing community, from the outset TACs were encouraged to set
up a Moodle site to house resources for TAs, as well as to strive for TA engagement through the forum feature on Moodle. Further to community building, the Learning and Teaching Centre has begun a series titled, *A Day in the Life of a TAC*, on our website. This feature showcases TACs delivering seminars to TAs with pictures and quotes from TAs about the benefits of the program.

To conclude the consultant role, each TAC is required to write a short report about his/her departmental seminars, the roles played, and any other information that could be useful to the next TAC in that department. This document, lesson plans, and materials developed for the TA seminar series are to be sent to the TA Training Program Coordinator and department liaison. Of course, current TACs have been encouraged to apply for the role again next year so that they can build on what they have learned.

**Continuation of Collaboration and Conversations**

To connect the work that the TACs have done in the 17 pilot departments to other programs at the Learning and Teaching Centre, a specialized certificate was developed – the *TA Fundamentals Certificate*, which recognizes TAs’ individual commitment to engaging in professional development, even at the Masters stage. The certificate requires attendance at all of the TA seminars (eight hours), development of an original instructional material, and a reflective writing piece that has the TA explain his/her instructional material, and experience in the TA seminars. Our hope is that by fostering engagement in the TA seminars and certificates, graduate students will recognize the importance and significance of professional development programs from the very beginning of their graduate program, concurrent with their other duties and responsibilities as graduate students. In this way, graduate students will be enculturated into the academic role where research and teaching coexist.

The TA Fundamentals Certificate is also applicable to the *Professional Development Program in University Teaching*. Part of the requirement for this certificate is attendance at 10 hours of professional development workshops that cover a range of topics, held at the Learning and Teaching Centre. Through this mechanism, graduate students are graduated into other programs at the centre.

To date, preliminary feedback about the program has included many positive affirmations of the value and effect on TAs and their professional development. Most notably, TAs commented on how the seminars provided much needed instruction about aspects of their role, such as how to grade fairly, facilitate discussion groups, and preparation for critical incidents that may occur. Moreover, the majority of TAs identified that an important aspect of the TA seminars was the community building it provided. TAs acknowledged that they now have several colleagues in their department to talk to about their TA role, and especially to share successes and challenges. Building a TA community within departments was an important goal of the program and hopefully one that will foster a greater TA community throughout campus.

However, TACs did run into a series of obstacles. One was with administrative requirements. Room availability for holding seminars was one such issue, as was communicating with those responsible for certain aspects related to their administrative and organizational duties during the summer months. Some of these will be alleviated as the program gets worked into standard yearly procedures. Another obstacle was with the involvement of returning graduate students in the TA seminars. Most TACs were hoping that their colleagues would attend and share their experiences. Some were successful in their department, but others were faced with graduate students who did not want to take the time to attend. An obstacle that was much discussed during the TAC seminars was the inconsistency with some departments making the TA seminars part of TAs’ paid hours and other departments making the TA seminars completely voluntary. When TAs were paid and the seminars made mandatory, some TACs recorded that TAs resented being made to attend, whereas on the other side, TACs who had TAs who voluntarily chose to attend, felt that their TAs should have been paid.

Since this is a pilot project, our first year is being researched so as to evaluate the overall effective-
ness of the TAC program so that the program can be carried forward. A research team has been assembled and through journaling by the TACs, documentation of parts of the program, materials gathered from the TAC curriculum that was developed by the TA Training Program Coordinator and focus groups with the TACs, our hope is that this model of collaboration will contribute further to the ongoing conversation about graduate student professional development. These conversations will address many of the challenges and successes that TACs had to contend with during this pilot project.

Overall, the TAC program provides that mentor, resource, and guide at TAs’ fingertips, ensuring that graduate students have access to the professional development programs and skill development that they need and seek.

References


Biography

Cynthia Korpan is the TA Training Program Coordinator in the Learning and Teaching Centre at the University of Victoria. She is interested in the professional development of graduate students, and in particular, the formal and informal experiential learning that TAs engage in through their departmental roles. Cynthia recently graduated with an M.A. from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Victoria.
Appendix A
Teaching Assistant Duties and Expectations
Fall 2008

1. How many TAs are in the department?
2. Which year of their graduate program are TAs starting to TA?
3. How long do they TA?
4. Any restrictions to a graduate student taking a TA position?
5. What kind of training does the department provide for TAs?
6. Are they required to take any type of training?
7. Are TAs assigned a mentor to oversee their teaching?
8. Does the department provide videos, handouts, syllabi, a manual, workshops, or lecture materials?
9. How often do you meet with the TAs?
10. Do the TAs meet together?
11. How often is the way that TAs are integrated into the department reviewed?
12. How are evaluations of TAs managed? By faculty and/or students?
13. Are peer reviews used?
14. How much time does a TA spend per week on duties?
15. What are the specific duties: Office hours? Emails? Grading? Lectures? Labs? Advising students?
16. How does the department follow up with TAs to find out what their experience was like?
17. Do TAs primarily assist with large classes?
18. Do TAs lecture? Run labs? Run Tutorials?
19. What technology is used by TAs?
20. Do TAs design questions for tests? Assign grades?
21. What training do you feel your TAs need to complete their duties efficiently?
22. Do you have a lead TA?
23. What do you think are the strengths of your program?
Although it is a growing concern for students and professors, academic in/civility remains difficult to define and to categorize. Consequently, developing prevention strategies is a challenge. Our conceptualization of civility consists of two dimensions: the “civic” aspect, in which the focus is on “citizenship” (i.e., consideration of the well-being of the entire class), and the “civil” aspect, in which the focus is on mechanisms used to secure the well-being of the class by cultivating “learning relationships” (i.e., respect for the “other” students and for the learning process). Given these conditions, in a civil learning community, students are more likely to focus on their learning and self-development as well as to actively participate and contribute to the life of their
classrooms. A civil environment allows professors to focus on their teaching and reduce misunderstandings, conflicts, and confrontations, which can seriously damage the professor-student learning relationship.

The purpose of this paper is to outline our experience of developing a framework designed to foster an understanding of incivility with the view of designing teaching environments that promote civility and nurture the fragile teaching and learning process. This paper has three specific aims, namely: 1) to broaden our understanding of the nature of in/civility; 2) to provide a framework within which to categorize examples of uncivil behaviours; and 3) to make suggestions for fostering civility in the classroom by co-constructing a declaration of civility as a foundation for a civil learning community.

Precursors to a Design for Civility: Understanding Incivility and its Antisocial Bullying Foundation

Two initiatives have informed our understanding of incivility. The first has focused on broadening our appreciation of the range of uncivil acts. For instance, we have encouraged students to expand their conception of incivility to include behaviours as well as attitudes. Furthermore, we have favoured a much more comprehensive approach that includes a range of acts from talking in class, cheating on exams, misusing technology, overreacting to perceived provocation, and so on. We have also found it informative to conceptualize the gravity of uncivil behaviours along a continuum, ranging from minor occurrences, such as disrupting lectures by means of loud conversations, to the more serious ones like when insults, threats, or other forms of intimidation are used and safety becomes an issue. In our efforts to help students construct a more comprehensive metric regarding the continuum of incivility, we also deemed it important to consider the severity of the outcome of various acts. In terms of consequences, the experience of incivility can affect a student’s academic and personal development in different ways, ranging from short-term disengagement in a course to long-term unfulfilled educational goals (Hirschy & Braxton, 2004).

The second initiative we have undertaken has focused on attempts to categorize occurrences of academic incivility in a systematic manner by examining them through the lens of our research on bullying (Marini & Dane, 2008; Marini, Dane, Bosacki, & YLC-CURA, 2006; Marini, Dane, & Kennedy, 2010). Adopting the Multidimensional Bullying Identification Model (see Marini, 2009) has permitted us to consider the finer-grained dimensions of incivility, and we have been able to define and categorize many of the uncivil acts reported by our students. Thus, when we ask our students about their experience of incivility, we can arrange their responses in terms of the form (i.e., type), function (i.e., motivation), type of involvement (i.e., from passive to active to aggressive), and in terms of the severity of outcome (i.e., from low or annoying, to mid or disruptive, to high or dangerous). For instance, in terms of form, the distinction between direct and indirect acts of incivility hinges on whether an uncivil act is carried out overtly, that is in plain view, or covertly, where attempts are made to conceal the act. With respect to motivation, it is helpful to differentiate between behaviours that arise due to a frustrating reaction to a perceived provocation (i.e., lashing out against a peer who does not agree with your point of view), from the proactive one, such as those that are planned and intentional (i.e., spreading rumours about a student in a seminar). In regard to types of involvement, these can range from passive to active to aggressive. Thus, in terms of intervention, it is helpful to distinguish those students who are passively involved (e.g., reading a newspaper in class) from those who are actively involved (e.g., talking during lectures), and those who are aggressive (e.g., publicly and loudly questioning the instructor’s competence or the fairness of the grade received on an assignment). In regard to the severity of outcomes, here, again we underscore the importance of locating the impact of incivility along a continuum, ranging from annoying to disruptive to dangerous.

Figure 1 provides a template for this initiative, which involves engaging students in a structured discussion of incivility. Therefore, after collecting
Co-Constructing the Foundation for a Civil Learning Community

Students’ accounts of incivility, their responses are separated into four categories to determine the type of lived experiences they bring to class, namely: 1) Forms; 2) Function; 3) Types of Involvement; and 4) Severity of Outcomes.

**Design for a Civil Learning Community: Co-Constructing a Declaration of Civility**

The distinctions made above help to pave the way towards general intervention strategies. For instance, while direct and reactive incivilities can usually be addressed by instructional interventions, which may include explicit statements on a syllabus about classroom “civic” expectations, other acts of incivility need to be addressed by different means, which include the fostering of positive learning relationships between students and between students and their instructors (Marini, 2007, 2009). In other words, to effectively address “civil” concerns that are connected to indirect and intentional incivilities and to minimize their subtle and hard-to-notice impact, it may be more effective if we attempt to build a shared understanding of what civility means to our students, and to create a statement outlining how we will relate to each other in our learning environment, and how we will resolve conflicts when they invariably arise. Thus, the following series of exercises is aimed at creating “civil” and healthy relationships, which are the foundation for a civil learning community.

**Step 1: Defining Civility**

The aim of this segment is to explore students’ understanding of the term “civility.” All of these activities work best when engagement is allowed to take place first at the individual level and then at the group level. It is important that individual voices be heard and given plenty of space. We begin the process by asking students to define civility by writing (or drawing) what it means to each of them. Once the individual contributions are completed, the group can be guided through an exercise of identifying some of the themes noted in the individual contributions. The purpose of this segment is to highlight key words and themes that represent the best definition of civility that the group has produced. Here are some possible examples of ci-

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1 Adapted from Marini, 2009; Marini, Dane, & Kennedy, 2010.
vility: mutual respect; perspective-taking; not cheating on exams; using technology properly; acceptance of diversity; caring, and feeling connected.

**Step 2: Operationalizing Civility**

In this segment, students are invited to describe in writing how they are going to make the definition of civility concrete. This important step will allow students some time to reflect on what they consider to be a manifestation of civility. At the group level, it is critical that a robust discussion take place in which different views are exchanged and assumptions are tested regarding the range of possible behaviours involved in civility. For example, what does mutual respect look like in a seminar? Similarly, what does considerate mean (e.g., students may be encouraged to think about the environment created by a considerate individual)? Depending on the time available, it is worth engaging students in brief role-playing exercises. For instance, what would the group do if a student were to chew gum loudly while the people around him/her are trying to focus on the seminar? More seriously, how would they make the theme of being respectful concrete in the context of a seminar discussion on the acceptance of diversity in a heterogeneous group? In this case, students may want to engage in some form of self-regulation where they would refrain from voicing their “uninformed” opinion on diversity by reflecting on the fact that it may hurt a classmate. The desired outcomes of this segment are those of building on the definitions from Step 1 and of giving life to what civility means for the group, in concrete behavioural terms as well as attitude. In other words, we want to provide opportunities for individuals and the group to reflect and express their opinions on how they will “live” their civility.

**Step 3: Constructing a Declaration of Civility**

In this segment, individuals are asked to generate a “statement of civility” that they believe the entire group may adopt. If students experience difficulties during this step, the instructor may have to remind them that the components of this statement should flow from the previous two steps. At the group level, the entire class is guided to generate “a communal declaration of civility.”

**Step 4: Sustaining Civility**

It is important to make provisions for civility to continue beyond the first few weeks of a term. Therefore, it is valuable for students to engage in the development of their own classroom’s declaration of civility. It is also important for an instructor to be vigilant of the process and, in some cases, to intervene with tactful suggestions aimed at putting in place mechanisms which ensure that civility is sustained through peaceful times as well as times of conflict. To that end, the instructor has to see to it that at least three key components are present in any communal declaration, including: 1) a definition of civility that acknowledges the importance of the learning relationship and makes mention of the concern for both the individual and the group; 2) a clear outline of the expectations of behaviour in peaceful times as well as in times of conflict (i.e., provide concrete examples of what we expect our civility to look like in good times [e.g., when we are in agreement on an issue] and in difficult times [e.g., when we are not in agreement]); and 3) an outline of the social mechanisms that will allow reparation of the learning relationship when it becomes strained, such as offering an apology when a line is crossed and someone is hurt, or offering to meet for the purpose of voicing concerns in the presence of a third party. The instructor may want to end this segment by inviting students to reflect on how they may be able to promote civility inside and outside the classroom.

As a final note, it is advantageous to carry out these activities as a group at the beginning of the academic term (usually the second week of class is best, rather than the first week when administrative details are the primary focus). This will set a positive tone and strengthen the social and human component of a learning relationship, thus facilitating the in vivo building of a shared understanding of civility. However, if this is not possible because of time pressure, an alternative to consider is that of engaging students electronically using the discussion boards available on most course management programs.

Taking students through these activities allows them to reflect on the importance of understanding the many dimensions of in/civility and offers them the opportunity to take ownership and re-
sponsibility for co-constructing a healthy, functional, and civil learning community for themselves and for those around them.

References


Authors’ Note

The present paper builds on the material presented in Marini (2009) and is based, in part, on the reflections generated by the presentation made at the 2009 STLHE Conference at the University of New Brunswick. This work is supported by a Brock Chancellor’s Chair for Teaching Excellence.

Biographies

Zopito Marini is a Professor of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. His commitment to the development of innovative pedagogy has been acknowledged with many awards, including the OCUFA (Ontario Confederation of Faculty Associations) Teaching Award, and a 3M National Teaching Fellow. He has received a Brock Chancellor’s Chair for Teaching Excellence to continue his investigation on the causes and consequences of in/civility in the classroom.

Christine Polihronis is a first year M.A. student in the Department of Psychology at Carleton University. As a part of the Healthy Relationships Lab, her research interests include the social and cognitive development of children and adolescents involved in aggression. More specifically, she is interested in how moral disengagement contributes to an uncivil learning community.

Wendy Blackwell is married with three sons. She spent many hours volunteering in public schools. Eventually her passion for working with children led her to Brock University where she is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education degrees concurrently. She is interested in pursuing a graduate degree to investigate the applications of civility in elementary school environment.
In this paper, we share phenomena experienced by a multi-cultural research team working collaboratively with Wolastoq (Maliseet) First Nations Elders to document rapidly disappearing Wolastoq language, culture, and knowledge. This knowledge will ultimately be stored in databanks for future educational, community, and heritage use. Embedded within this research experience is a constantly evolving ebb and flow of culture, being, and relationships. As a collaborative research team, we explore ethical ramifications of dynamic, symbiotic relationships we share with Elder participants, requirements of university ethical review processes, and how this process shapes the knowledge that we collaboratively produce. We question how this nexus of cultures and ethics of researchers and collaborators directs the educational materials that we construct. Situated between the high tide of ethical standards and the low tide of the application of these ethics, is where the tides meet, and standards and praxis interact. Lastly, we suggest ways to supplement the ethics review process for social and educational research to better respect the individual rights and rationality of participants with whom we research, deepening the significance of such studies and promoting social justice.

Considering Culture and Ethics in First Nations Educational Research

In the following essay we explore how ethical demands are mediated and interpreted within the context of a collaborative research team composed of university-based academics and members from the local Wolastoq nation. The primary questions we applied to our research were drawn from the Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) Report of the National Aboriginal Health Organization (2007). They are:

1. Who owns the research?
2. Who controls the research process?
3. Who is involved in implementing the research?
4. Who benefits from the research and, in this case, the ethics review process?

Introduction to the Research

Before the Dam: Documenting Spoken Wolastq in Educational, Spiritual and Cultural Context is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Strategic Grants, and is based at the University of New Brunswick. The goal of this project is to work with Wolastq Elders¹ to create an audio/video archive of recordings to preserve Wolastq language, knowledge, and culture. Historically, Wolastq territory spans a large area of Maine (USA), New Brunswick, and Quebec (Canada), being centered in what is known in English as the Saint John River valley. Wolastqewiyik means the ancestral people of the beautiful and bountiful river (Perley, 2007/8).

The purpose of our research is to work with consenting Wolastq Elders to document Wolastq language using film and audio recordings. Embedded in the language is cultural and historical knowledge, which has been taught primarily through oral education. Within a context of Euro-Canadian cultural, educational, linguistic, and political domination for centuries, Wolastq language and culture has been severely diminished and destroyed through the imposition of assimilationist policies, with the intentions of absorbing Wolastq nations into Canadian culture. According to David Crystal’s (2000) scale of language loss, Wolastq language is currently “seriously endangered” if not “moribund,” with very little significant usage in communities or institutions.

Our project members have been working with Wolastq Elders on language, knowledge, and culture for many years. Many Elders have come to be friends, teachers, and inspiring mentors. At least partially as a result of the significance of these relationships, we have increasingly focused on cultivating respect for Elders involved in the research process as participants, colleagues, and carriers of knowledge. Moreover, we acknowledge that Elders are foundational to our research and, through this research, to our place in the academic world. Through questioning experiences of researchers and participants, we aim to open fertile ground for debate and thought in how we conduct research and how we may be able to do so in a manner that is more aware, respectful, and socially just. To accomplish this we will concentrate primarily on question four (although all the questions are linked): Who benefits from the research, and the ethics review process? Sub-questions to this are: how can we improve research experiences for participants? How can we practice the greatest respect for those whose knowledge on which our research depends?

Questioning University Ethical Protocols

It took several months for Before the Dam to get through an ethics review at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) Research Ethics Board (REB), and in this paper we consider the context, significance, and rigor of this process and the discourses upon which the process relies. While these perspectives in which the REB is embedded are taken as universal, they are local to the context of the academy and its Euro-Canadian roots (Jardine, 2005). The UNB REB process follows The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (1998), which includes the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the primary financial supporter of our research. Universities are institutions with origins in, and a long history of, Eurocentrism. Who are the actual people who review and have the agency to authorize (or not) what is allowed as research? “They have privileged the scientific method as a means to access the truth…in fact, one only has to review the Board of Consulting Editors of any journal in the field to ascertain who is charged with saying what counts as true” (Gallagher, 2007). We need only look at the composition of many REBs to see that they are largely dominated by those who are in the privileged position to conduct research rather

¹ Locally, Elders are considered as such by peers and community members for a set of factors, such as, but not limited to, special lived experience, community involvement, applied wisdom, leadership, responsibility, and fulfilling traditional roles.
than those being researched. The claim to authority over ethics and truth follows from this specific positioning. This imbalance is something that needs to be addressed at the institutional level, since it is not necessarily within the scope of individual REB members who bring to the REB process their time and good intentions. Section 3.5 of the University Policy on Research involving Humans (2009) states that:

REB Membership shall have at least the following membership (total membership being at least five):

- one member knowledgeable in ethics;
- one member knowledgeable in relevant law;
- two members from faculties normally conducting research involving humans;
- one community representative (two if the total membership exceeds five).

While it is clear that the University REB process is attempting to be inclusive, we question whether these attempts have gone far enough. As it currently stands, the UNB policy does not adequately allow for, and does not sufficiently specify, the need to have cultural diversity, nor indigenous peoples as members of the REB. *The Tri-Council Policy Statement* (1998) expands on the last point: “The community member requirement…is essential to help broaden the perspective and the value base of the REB beyond the institution, and thus advances dialogue with, and accountability to, local communities.” This statement does not specify that the community representative must be from within the cultural group involved in the study. While it is entirely possible that a Wolastoq person reviewed our research proposal, it was not mandatory.

Given the history of Wolastoq First Nations people in the local area, and that UNB operates on land once occupied entirely by Wolastoq people, there is certainly right for at least one Wolastoq person to review research proposed to be done in historically Wolastoq territory. Moreover, in this case, not just doing research in Wolastoq territory, but with Wolastoq people, there is not simply a right for Wolastoq people to be represented on the REB, but a responsibility.

Section 2.2 (Principles) of the University Policy on Research Involving Humans (2009) proclaims “research involving humans is to be carried out with respect for human dignity, for free and informed consent, for vulnerable persons, for privacy and confidentiality, for justice and inclusiveness, and for the need to balance harms and benefits.” While the language used emphasizes respect and justice, it is unclear how this is actually implemented. The REB protocols as listed above need to be critically tried and tested in the practice of research, each context raising new questions about how such requirements are to be improved and implemented.

For *Before the Dam* research we asked participants for written consent to be involved in the research, before interviews commenced, and for consent to use their materials once the interviews were completed. While interviewing was underway, this also frequently involved seeking specific permission to use a participant’s media in any publications surrounding the ongoing research. While this consent process is essential from the contemporary academic/institutional point of view, in practice it is often the case that participants are at least partially unclear about what the consent process entails, and for what purpose it exists. In many cases, ours included, the various levels of consent required us to seek approval from community and governance structures within the Aboriginal community as well as from individual participants. The desires and expectations of people involved at each level were frequently different and sometimes even contradictory. These complexities of access and permission are exacerbated by the implicit assumption embedded in the REB process that Aboriginal communities are homogenous, and that the various political levels that govern Aboriginal communities share the same desires for their peoples and communities. The marked difference in understanding around the REB process between participants, academics, and administrators begs the question: Who is the consent process for? Our experience inclines us to think that the consent process does not go beyond a safeguarding of academics and sponsoring institutions from potential future liability. The intellectual property and privacy rights of participants are not equally protected, or respected. With this in mind,
it appears that we need to supplement the ethics review process to be more concerned with respecting individual participant’s rights.

Compensation

The world in which academics now engage in order to achieve success in funding is one that is little understood beyond academia. The Elders with whom we work have little understanding of the relatively high level of funding on which university-based researchers operate. It is clear that, with questions such as: “what do you do for work?” there is an understanding that visiting is a matter of us coming to listen for the pleasure and edification of learning from their wisdom. The work of research is not understood, certainly not as something that has a monetary value, and this realization causes some awareness of inequality that only certain members of the research equation are compensated. When research is regularly supported with thousands of dollars in funding, is it fair, just, or respectful to give Elders token (yet sincere) gifts, like tobacco, tea, beans, or fish, and occasionally also small honoraria when often they do not have enough money for absolute essentials such as energy bills in the bitter cold of winter? Thus far, Elder knowledge and time is only beginning to be recognized or remunerated through major funding agencies such as SSHRC. New funding strategies are beginning to recognize the value of such input by allowing for honoraria to be paid to key Elders (AREI, 2008). This change in itself is monumental. However, for the work and knowledge involved on the part of the participant, honoraria are minor financial appreciations.

With this understanding, however, it is clear that the REB process is not deeply enough concerned with equality or justice, or undoing neo-colonial discourses and knowledge/power structures. Through the REB, the University has a vested interest in allowing research to be done, and therefore in passing proposals through the ethics review, as it brings increased funding, prestige, and notoriety to the University.

One must ask if it is just or respectful to request that participant collaborators give to the researchers with little financially reciprocated. The relationship is not entirely one-sided, as the Elders with whom we work also have expectations from the research, such as having books or films made with their teachings. In our research we are working to benefit the communities with our databank (an invaluable resource). However, while we (and many) researchers operate on a significant grant, there is not adequate consideration for financially compensating our participant collaborators. Elders provide their wisdom and their time to our project for little remuneration. We academics are paid for the knowledge that we accumulate and employ, whereas the researched – our colleagues, the Elders – are not. Elders do not often have their knowledge legitimized by academic degrees, denying them recognition within the academic world. This denies value to their knowledge and expertise, knowledge for which we are working to bolster appreciation. It is an important and significant task to begin to accredit Elder knowledge.

Larger discourses and improvements in research can be revealed through reviewing some of the forces at play in our experiences and relationships as academics, graduate students, researchers, and collaborators. While personal to us, many of the points discussed are also found within contexts of institutional discourses and therefore are endemic to academic research and knowledge production. Through academics and colonialism, these are long reinforced relationships, in which the academy has focused on marginalized people, maintaining and perpetuating their marginality. Another aspect of this marginalization is that studying other communities can turn them into objects of knowledge, perpetuating unjust knowledge/power structures (Mills, 2003). While we institutionally privileged ones are obviously receiving much benefit from this research, it is not simply uni-directional. Assuming in the end the materials do make it back to the individual participants, their families and communities, along with future generations will benefit from these multi-media records of their ancestors and traditional knowledge.

Respecting participants’ rationality and intelligence, how can we supplement ethical reviews to heighten concern with participants’
perspectives on their experience, improving the research process for non-academic participants?

First we must recognize that social research takes place in the complex world of humans, living within inevitable power relations and imbalances. Our research necessitates that we work with and depend on human participants. As part of respecting human rights, we must respect that research participants are themselves rational beings, more than solely objects of research. Satterthwaite asks: “what… happen[s], in midst of all this, to the ownership of knowledge? Whose knowledge counts?” (Satterthwaite, Atkinson, & Gale, 2003).

On one level, participants’ knowledge is valued to the point that we want them to be part of our study – but not enough that participants are justly compensated. While our primary research goal is to actively collect knowledge and information on culture, language, and traditions, perhaps we could also ask questions and collect information on how the participants feel about their part in the research process.

As a regular part of research, as academics, we meet regularly and discuss thoughts and concerns regarding the project. However, we rarely ask participants for their own critiques of the study. By initiating such a survey, we could better respect participants’ intelligence, improve our relationships, deepen the significance of the work, and improve how we do social research in the future. An outline of possible questions for discussion is offered here:

- Have you felt that your knowledge and experiences (culture/traditions) have been honoured?
- What do you think are the strengths of the research experience?
- How could we improve the interview process? What could we do differently?
- Have you felt comfortable throughout the interview(s)? Is there anything we could do to increase your comfort?
- What do you think is fair compensation for your involvement/work?
- Would you be involved again in a similar study? Why or why not?
- Are there any other topics or stories you would like to talk about?
- What would you like done with the recorded stories, language, and knowledge?

By directly asking collaborator participants such questions we can begin to better understand research experiences from participants’ perspectives. While this participant-based ethical/experiential review process is not currently a requirement for social scientific and educational research, as academics we could integrate this sort of survey into all our human based research. As The Tri-Council Policy Statement (1998) makes explicit in Section 6 (Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples): “The agencies have not held sufficient discussions with representatives of the affected peoples or groups, or with the various organizations or researchers involved. The agencies have therefore decided that it is not yet appropriate to establish policies in this area.” Perhaps we will further open up discussion regarding aboriginal participants rights and experiences, and help participants better know the research process, and their role(s) in it. This could even raise interest and appreciation in the research process from communities in which we work, and help to grow a new generation of researchers.

Conclusion

While current ethical review processes are an essential part of human-based social and educational research, we argue that they do not sufficiently include non-academic participants’ reflections and perspectives on the research process. Without sincere and deep concern for the participants, we may be reproducing social inequalities, which we strive to diminish. We plan to improve our research through combining required University ethical review processes with our own surveys of participants’ experiences.

“At every moment, step by step, one must confront what one is thinking and saying with what one is doing, with what one is.”

Foucault in Jardine, 2005
References


Biographies

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Des Dilemmes Normatifs dans l’Enseignement du Français Langue Maternelle dans les Universités Anglocanadiennes : Le Cas de l’Université de Windsor

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Le présent article examine le décalage entre la norme prescriptive de la variété de français enseigné et les normes d’usages des variétés de français pratiqué par les étudiants canadiens de français langue maternelle (désormais ECFLM). Il montre que dans la francophonie canadienne minoritaire, la ligne de démarcation entre les deux types de norme est parfois tenue, le français vernaculaire des ECFLM ayant gardé certaines formes que la norme du français enseigné considère comme des écarts. Cependant, une consultation des ouvrages normatifs tels que Le Bon usage révèle que certaines de ces formes ont été, du moins à une certaine époque, légitimes et valorisées. D’où les dilemmes normatifs du professeur : doit-il les sanctionner quand ils surgissent dans les productions orales ou écrites des ECFLM? Doit-il au contraire les tolérer? Pour apporter des éléments de réponses à ces deux questions, l’article examine quelques points de divergence entre le français véhiculaire enseigné et le français vernaculaire des ECFLM inscrits dans le programme de français de l’Université de Windsor.

Les étudiants inscrits dans le programme de français de l’Université de Windsor peuvent être classés en trois catégories1: les étudiants de français langue maternelle (étudiants franco-canadiens de souche, étudiants d’origine française, belge ou suisse), les étudiants de français langue seconde (les Anglo-canadiens et les étudiants/immigrants allophones de la deuxième génération devenus anglo-

1 Le problème avec les catégories rigides est qu’elles ne correspondent pas toujours à la réalité qui est, elle, beaucoup plus fluide et complexe. Il n’est pas rare de rencontrer dans notre programme des étudiants pour qui le français peut être considéré à la fois comme langue maternelle, langue seconde et/ou langue étrangère, selon la définition qu’on donne à ces termes (les étudiants libanais ou de l’Afrique francophone).
phones) et les étudiants de français langue étrangère (étudiants internationaux ou immigrants de la première génération originaires de pays dans lesquels le français n’a aucun statut, par exemple la Pologne, la Roumanie, l’Italie, le Mexique…) (Mboudjeke, 2008). Dans cet article, nous examinons les dilemmes normatifs consécutifs aux conflits entre le français vernaculaire des étudiants canadiens de français langue maternelle (désormais ECFLM) et le français véhiculaire enseigné au niveau universitaire. Quelles sont les causes de ces dilemmes? Quelles en sont les manifestations? Comment les résoudre? Voilà les trois questions auxquelles nous allons apporter des éléments de réponse.

Les Causes des Dilemmes Normatifs

Les dilemmes normatifs auxquels sont confrontés les professeurs de français à l’Université de Windsor (et par extension dans toutes les universités) sont d’abord attribuables aux conflits traditionnels entre la norme prescriptive de la langue enseignée et les normes d’usage des variétés de langue pratiquées par les apprenants. En effet, dans toutes les situations d’enseignement, la langue de l’école est différente de la langue de la maison ou de la rue. La norme de la langue enseignée (norme prescriptive) est un ensemble de règles figées, basées sur les pratiques langagières de « grands » locuteurs (écrivains, journalistes, classe bourgeoise, élite intellectuelle…) (Galisson & Coste, 1976). Cette norme caractérise surtout l’écrit, régit la variété socialement valorisée (celle qui favorise la mobilité sociale), manque de cohérence et de logique, contient des jugements de valeur, est explicite, rigide et tyrannique, et surtout, combat toute forme de variation linguistique (diachronique, diphasique ou diatopique). Elle s’oppose, de ce point de vue, aux normes de fonctionnement ou d’usages que Moreau (1997, p. 218) définit comme les « habitudes linguistiques partagées par les membres d’une communauté ou d’un sous-groupe de celle-ci ». Celles-ci caractérisent plutôt la langue orale, régissent les variétés socialement dévalorisées (ces variétés assument des fonctions d’intégration et d’appartenance à un groupe), esquissent d’éliminer les incohérences de la norme prescriptive, varient en fonction des communautés et sont implicites et souples.

La coexistence de ces deux types de norme ne peut que générer des conflits. Il arrive en effet que des formes explicitement proscrites par la norme prescriptive de la langue enseignée soient implicitement prescrites par les normes d’usages (Par exemple, il n’est pas rare d’entendre les francophones dire Je me rappelle de son nom*). Il arrive aussi que des formes explicitement prescrites par la norme prescriptive soient implicitement proscrites par les normes d’usage (Par exemple, la norme du français international prescrit l’usage de l’indicatif après la conjonction temporelle Après que. Cependant, la forme Après que+subjonctif est plus fréquente, sans doute parce que la conjonction Avant que est toujours suivie du subjonctif).

Dans le contexte francocanadien, ces conflits sont exacerbés par le fait que certaines formes que la norme prescriptive du français enseigné condamne ont été autrefois légitimes. C’est que les aïeux des ECFLM qui ont commencé à quitter la France à partir du XVIe siècle ont emporté avec eux des formes linguistiques légitimes qu’ils ont continué d’utiliser dans leur nouveau pays, voire à transmettre à leurs descendants, cependant qu’elles tombaient en désuétude dans leur pays d’origine. En d’autres termes, les ECFLM ont hérité des formes qui ne sont hors-normes que si l’on adopte un point de vue exclusivement synchronique sur la langue française (le français ici et maintenant), mais qui gagnent en validité pour peu qu’on adopte une perspective diachronique (l’histoire et l’évolution du français au Canada). Comment se manifestent concrètement ces dilemmes?  

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2 Le groupe d’ECFLM se subdivise en deux sous-groupes: les francophones restreints qui sont issus de foyers exogamiques (ils ont un parent anglophone), sont bilingues anglo-dominants et utilisent rarement le français dans leur vie privée et les francophones non-restreints, qui sont issus de foyers endogamiques (les deux parents sont francophones), sont bilingues plus ou moins équilibrés et utilisent assez souvent le français dans leur vie privée (Mougeon et Béniak, 1995).
Les Manifestations des Dilemmes

Pour mettre en évidence les dilemmes normatifs dans l’enseignement du français langue maternelle à l’Université de Windsor, nous allons présenter quelques formes que la norme du français contemporain enseigné condamne. En nous appuyant sur les traitements qu’en font plusieurs ouvrages normatifs, nous montrerons que le professeur de français qui les rencontre dans les copies des étudiants risque de ne pas toujours savoir quelle décision prendre. Occasionnellement, nous présenterons les résultats d’une enquête que nous avons menée auprès de 28 ECFLM inscrits dans le programme de français de l’Université de Windsor.

a) À cause que

Dans Grevisse (1975, p. 1167), cette locution est suivie de l’adjectif « vieilli », ce qui en fait un archaïsme. De Villers (2003, p. 247) la présente comme une « locution ancienne ». Dans son exemple, elle prend le soin d’indiquer qu’il s’agit d’une forme inacceptable puisqu’elle écrit : « Elle n’a pas pu venir à l’école parce qu’elle (et non à cause qu’elle) était malade ». Quant à l’Office québécois de la langue française (désormais OQLF), il constate que « la locution conjonctive à cause que, …/ était usuelle aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles – elle est d’ailleurs attestée chez de nombreux auteurs ». Cependant, elle « est donnée comme vieillie dans les dictionnaires depuis le XIXe siècle. Elle a été généralement remplacée par parce que. Si à cause que subsiste encore dans la langue populaire, son emploi dans un registre neutre ou soutenu est toutefois à éviter ». Bref, les ouvrages normatifs contemporains reconnaissent bien que la forme à cause que était autrefois légitime. Pour l’OQLF, on peut encore la tolérer dans la langue populaire (français vernaculaire), mais non dans le registre neutre ou soutenu (français enseigné). Mais que faire quand l’ECFLM qui l’utilise habituellement s’en sert dans un cours de conversation ? Par ailleurs, on sait que l’oral influence généralement l’écrit et qu’un étudiant qui dit habituellement à cause que risque aussi de l’écrire spontanément dans un devoir. Faut-il le sanctionner indistinctement ?

b) À chaque (fois/jour/semaine/mois/année); À tous les jours/à toutes les (semaines)

Pendant que De Villers (2003) trouve de telles constructions vieillies et fautives, Grevisse constate plutôt que « la langue littéraire3 dit également à chaque fois, à la première fois /…/ » (1975, p. 988). Dans sa Banque de dépannage linguistique, l’OQLF adopte une attitude plus nuancée quand elle écrit : « Bien qu’on les trouve chez de grands écrivains, les constructions à chaque, à tous et à toutes sont considérées comme vieillies ou littéraires dans les ouvrages de référence. Ces usages sont toutefois encore courants au Québec ». Et nous ajouterons qu’ils sont aussi très courants dans le sud-ouest de l’Ontario. D’où le dilemme normatif. Faut-il les sanctionner quand ils surgissent dans les copies des ECFLM ? En dehors de De Villers, ni Grevisse, ni l’OQLF ne condamnent ces constructions de façon explicite, ce qui les fait nager dans une zone grise. Nous avons demandé à 28 ECFLM de dire si la phrase « Les parents doivent lire à leurs jeunes enfants à chaque jour » est correcte ou incorrecte. 53 pour cent de nos répondants l’ont trouvée correcte, tandis que 47 pour cent l’ont trouvée incorrecte. Précisons que la majorité des étudiants qui l’ont trouvée incorrecte étaient en 3e ou en 4e année d’études universitaires, donc assez influencés par les discours normatifs. Cependant, même s’ils jugent la forme incorrecte, il se trouve que certains d’entre eux les utilisent spontanément dans leurs propres productions écrites. Que faire dans de tels cas ?

c) Chaque en emploi absolu

De Villers (2003, p. 264) fait remarquer que « l’adjectif chaque ne s’emploie que devant un nom singulier ». Grevisse reconnaît sa fréquence dans la langue populaire et commerciale : « En principe, écrit-il,

3 Joe Dassin dit dans l’une de ses chansons : « Je voudrais être une pomme suspendue à un pommier et qu’à chaque fois qu’elle passe elle vienne me mordre dedans ». Nous souignons.
chacun doit être suivi immédiatement d’un nom. néanmoins, dans la conversation populaire, dans la langue commerciale ou populaire, on l’emploie fréquemment d’une manière absolue et on dit par exemple: Ces cravates coûtent tant de francs chaque Puis deux cafés au lait à un franc chaque... Mais c’est là une façon de parler que le bon usage n’a guère reçue jusqu’à présent » (1975, p. 417). Pour Boudreau et al. (1998), l’emploi absolu de chaque est un anglicisme (influence de l’anglais each). Enfin, Boulanger et al. (1992, p. 82) considèrent cet emploi comme non marqué puisqu’ils donnent comme exemple : « Ces livres coûtent un dollar chaque », sans aucun commentaire métalinguistique. Que faire quand on les trouve dans les copies d’ECFLM? S’agit-il de formes complètement illégitimes?

d) Si + conditionnel

Pendant que l’OQLF condamne l’usage du conditionnel dans une proposition hypothétique introduite par si- : « /Le verbe/ n’est jamais au conditionnel dans ce contexte », tranche-t-il, De Villers avertit : « Attention! Avec la conjonction si, le verbe de la subordonnée est au mode indicatif et non au conditionnel » (De Villers, 2003, p. 1338). Seul Grevisse prend le soin de signaler la fréquence de cette construction dans la langue populaire : « La langue populaire (Paris, Poitou, Touraine, Anjou, Belgique, Suisse-romande...) emploie le conditionnel après si ou si que, marquant le potentiel ou l’irréel: Si tu pourrais m’voir à présent, tu pourrais m’donner pus d’quatre-vingts ans (J. Rictus, Cantilènes du Malheur) /.../ » (Grevisse 1975, p. 1195). Cette forme est également très fréquente dans le vernaculaire des ECFLM. C’est ainsi que sur 28 ECFLM, 47 pour cent (n = 13) estiment que la phrase Si je serais riche, j’achèterais une voiture est grammaticalement acceptable.

e) Autres formes

D’autres formes fréquemment utilisées par les ECFLM sont aller au médecin, au dentiste, espérer de, se fâcher avec quelqu’un, crier après quelqu’un, je vas. Comme la plupart de ces étudiants sont bilingues français/anglais, on tend généralement à considérer ces formes (en dehors de je vas) uniquement comme des anglicismes puisqu’on peut dire en anglais go to the doctor, to the dentist, hope to, to be angry with, to shout after. Mais la consultation du Bon usage de Grevisse (1975) nous donne à comprendre qu’il s’agit de formes autrefois acceptables en français. C’est en vertu de cette légitimité que La Fontaine pouvait écrire :

« Sire, répond l’agneau, que Votre Majesté Ne se mette pas en colère ; Mais plutôt qu’elle considère Que je me vais désaltérant Dans le courant, Plus de vingt pas au-dessous d’Elle /.../ ».

Au sujet du conflit entre les formes je vas et je vais, Vaugelas faisait remarquer que « Tous ceux qui savent écrire et qui ont étudié, disent «je vais» [...] mais toute la cour dit «je va», et ne peut souffrir «je vais», qui passe pour un mot Provincial ou du peuple de Paris ». En d’autres termes, la forme « Je va » caractérisait d’abord le parler des grands de la cour qui, par orgueil, se refusaient d’imiter l’élite intellectuelle de Paris qui, elle, disait plutôt « Je vais ». Que l’on dise « Je vais » dans le français contemporain, voilà qui témoigne de la victoire de l’élite intellectuelle sur la monarchie en France (à la faveur de la Révolution de 1789). Mais pendant que les intellectuels réussissaient à imposer le « Je vais » en France, la forme « Je vas » continuait son bonhomme de chemin au Canada. Il n’est donc pas surprenant qu’on la retrouve, encore vivace, dans le répertoire verbal des ECFLM, surtout à l’oral. Doit-on la sanctionner sans discernement?

Gestion des Dilemmes Normatifs dans l’Enseignement du Français Langue Maternelle

Pour gérer les dilemmes normatifs, les professeurs doivent d’abord prendre en compte les objectifs gé-

4 Cité par Crane (1907 :331).

- Les professeurs doivent adopter une pédagogie différenciée dans la salle de classe. Celle-ci permet de prendre en compte la diversité des attentes et des motivations des apprenants. Les attentes et les motivations des ECFLM ne sont sans doute pas les mêmes que celles des étudiants de français langue seconde ou étrangère.
- Avec la pédagogie différenciée, les professeurs peuvent fixer, comme objectif d’apprentissage du français langue maternelle, le bidialectalisme. Les traits caractéristiques du français vernaculaire des ECFLM sont alors explicitement contrastés avec les traits caractéristiques du véhicule enseigné. On fait comprendre à l’apprenant qu’il y va de son intérêt de bien distinguer les contextes dans lesquels utiliser tel ou tel trait.

- Les professeurs doivent distinguer soigneusement la langue orale de la langue écrite. L’ECFLM qui dit habituellement je vas risque de l’utiliser spontanément dans un cours de conversation. À notre avis, il ou elle ne doit pas être pénalisé(e), à moins que le cours de conversation ne soit qu’un cours d’écrit normatif oralisé (Charttrand & Paré, 2005). Comme il ne l’est pas, comme il ne doit pas l’être, il importe que le professeur fasse preuve d’une ouverture d’esprit pour ne pas frustrer l’apprenant. Et lorsque ces formes parviennent à se glisser dans les productions écrites, le professeur peut écrire, en regard de ces formes anciennement acceptées, les formes contemporaines, mais sans pénaliser l’auteur du texte. En revoyant sa copie, l’apprenant pourra alors (re)prendre conscience du fait qu’on ne dit pas seulement à cause que (comme c’est le cas dans son vernaculaire) mais aussi parce que.

En conclusion, le professeur qui enseigne à des ECFLM ne peut pas toujours sanctionner indistinctement tous leurs « écarts », notamment ceux qui relèvent d’un ancien état du français. Le professeur risque d’appeler « écarts » des formes que l’apprenant va retrouver dans des classiques ou dans les textes de chansons. En effet, comment dire à un étudiant que la forme à chaque fois est inacceptable quand il l’écoute dans la chanson de Joe Dassin, la lit dans les correspondances des écoles françaises du sud-ouest de l’Ontario, l’entend à longueur de journée à la télévision et à la radio? Pourquoi La Fontane peut-il écrire je vas et lui non? À notre avis, la solution à ce problème consiste à fixer le bidialectalisme comme objectif d’apprentissage pour les ECFLM. On doit leur apprendre non pas à mépriser leur vernaculaire, mais plutôt à reconnaître et à apprécier sa différence.

Références


Biographie

Jean-Guy Mboudjeke holds a Ph.D. in French Studies and currently teaches linguistics, sociolinguistics, and translation at the University of Windsor. His research interests include translation studies, contrastive discourse analysis, language teaching, languages in contact, and pragmatics. He has authored articles published in such renowned international journals as Le Langage et l’Homme, Across Languages and Cultures, Linguistica Atlantica, and the Journal of Pragmatics.
Electronic Social Networks, Teaching, and Learning

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This paper explores the relationship between electronic social networks, teaching, and learning. Previous studies have shown a strong positive correlation between student engagement and learning. By extending this work to engage instructors and add an electronic component, our study shows possible teaching improvement as well. In particular, enthusiastic teachers and learners have a more positive attitude toward their work and studies.

Introduction

There is distinct evidence that students learn better when they are engaged (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Similarly, teachers teach better when they are engaged (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Concurrently there is a strong, possibly economic, push in academia to distance education and e-learning with technologies such as WebCT and Blackboard. On this basis, we became interested in investigating the potential benefits of electronic social networks in teaching and learning.

Our research was motivated by the more than 200,000,000 active Facebook users as of May 2009. For the purposes of our work, we defined electronic social networks broadly to include many technologies, such as telephone, text messaging, electronic mail, instant messaging, chats, discussion boards, Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, and Internet telephones, including webcams. These electronic social networks can be very effective tools, allowing us to simplify and improve teaching and learning and simultaneously have fun. Also, instructors and students will be less likely to object to the use of technologies if we can show that scholarship is not diminished through electronic means.

Our research goals were to develop a better understanding of electronic social networks in teaching and learning, to examine their effects on teaching and learning, and to incorporate active electronic social network components into an existing course. We formed three research questions:

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of electronic social networks in education?
2. How can electronic social networks improve teaching?
3. How can electronic social networks improve learning?

Social Networks and Electronic Social Networks

Social networks imply regular daily, weekly, or monthly activities. There must be interaction with two-way communication. Individuals can draw on resources from other network members (Paxton, 1999). In a teaching context, this means active contact or connection with peers, professors, and course content. The addition of electronic connections must continue the interactivity, allowing students to connect with each other, the professor, and course content.

A study of social networks and dementia risk showed that engaging in activities that cover more than one of the mental, physical, or social components seems to be more beneficial than to be engaged in only one type of activity (Karp et al., 2006). Even small contributions of the mental, physical, or social components mattered when accumulated (Karp et al., 2006). Keeping the brain active and engaged is key, whether the research is studying dementia risk or education. Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006) investigated social engagement in the classroom finding that the lowest-ability students benefit more from engagement than classmates.

The literature has clearly shown that social networks are good for personal well-being (Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Paxton, 1999). If social networks are good, then shouldn’t electronic social networks be just as good? This conclusion is counter-intuitive, however, if one considers that people who spend too much time on computers are considered to be anti-social and often prefer to be alone. Are we then creating isolated social outcasts?

There is conflicting literature on the social benefit of technology. On the negative side, Internet use detracts from face-to-face time with others, so it reduces social capital (Nie, 2001). Positively, however, online interactions may supplement or replace in-person interactions, mitigating loss from time spent online (Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). Successful electronic social networks were able to leverage existing offline networks for stronger social ties between members (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Landqvist & Teigland, 2005). There is a positive relationship between use of Facebook and social capital (Ellison et al., 2007) – the resources accumulated through the relationships among people (Coleman, 1988).

Online social networks allow users to gather or share information. Some networks provide emotional support, particularly for health, companionship, and friends. The depth and breadth of relationships impact benefits: the more you put in, the more you get out (Bambina, 2007; Paxton, 1999).

Electronic Social Networks in Education

Several studies have linked Facebook and academics with conflicting results. One study of college students found improved psychological well-being, suggesting that Facebook might provide greater benefits for users experiencing low self-esteem and low life satisfaction (Ellison et al., 2007). Research by Cho, Gay, Davidson, and Ingraffea (2007) reported that central players in evolving collaborative social networks tended to get higher final grades. Another study, however, suggested that Facebook use might be related to lower academic achievement in college and graduate school (Karpinski & Duberstein, 2009). Conversely, Pasek, More, and Romer (2009) concluded that Facebook use is more common among individuals with higher grades. A final study concluded that Facebook users were no different from non-users in terms of changes in academic performance (Pasek et al., 2009). Clearly, the jury is still out!

Electronic social networks in teaching and learning are defined broadly to include discussion forums and threads, chat rooms, interactive videos, games, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and other virtual teaching techniques. Social software also includes blogs, wikis, trackback, podcasting, and video blogs. Hyperlinking, tags, and concept maps
can organize the array of electronic data. This technology has been shown to be good for both distance education and in-class learners. Discussion boards can develop an online community of learners and support these learners in their studies (Sheard, 2004). This is especially valuable for distance learners (Benbunan-Fich & Hiltz, 2003). Reading and searching (and teaching and learning) are significantly different in this world.

Web 2.0 is the concept of interaction with the Internet, using social Internet technologies, such as listservs, Usenet groups, discussion forums, and groupware. Web-based communities grow up around common interests like teaching and learning. eLearning 2.0 is computer-based communication, information sharing, inter-operability, and collaboration to support learning. This can include standard ideas of social networks (Facebook, Twitter), video sharing (YouTube), video and audio podcasts, wikis, blogs, and social bookmarking.

Collaborative software and groupware enable group projects online through shared documents, files, comments, and PowerPoint. Students can consolidate the multiple parts of a group report, for example, into one cohesive whole electronically. Work can be done without having to physically meet or be in the same location or time zone. Students can practice talks online in preparation for an in-class presentation. This group software is available free online with Google Apps as well as integrated with many teaching systems. Google provides a suite of free online collaboration tools.

At least 10 Canadian educational institutions use Second Life, a virtual learning environment, in their teaching. Teachers can set up virtual visits to company headquarters, for example, as a case study teaching tool. Teachers can also have virtual office hours. Students can meet and practice presentations in the virtual environment or use a virtual reading room with 3D encyclopedia. Simulation of complex situations is one of the most popular uses of the site.

Taking IT Global (www.takingitglobal.org) is a social network for youth interested in global issues. The site includes Action Tools to start a group or petition about a cause of interest. Virtual class-rooms are established with blogs, maps, video chats, and discussion boards about global issues – all secure and teacher-controlled.

**Empirical Study**

We chose to combine the use of electronic social networks for engagement with course internationalization initiatives in a fourth-year computer science course. Course internationalization – adding international components to an existing course – is being promoted widely as education becomes more globally focused. The course had 48 students in January 2009. Students developed an international database; an industry visitor spoke about off-shoring in India; students participated in international research and presentations, in-class and online discussions, debate and Jeopardy games; and international student perspectives were sought throughout the term.

We conducted 23 informal interviews, gathered 121 archival e-mails from 36 student correspondents over four months, and documented 60 discussion posts. We recorded written reports, PowerPoint presentations, international examination answers, class attendance, and in-class participation. Data was analyzed for engagement and international elements, engagement in small group work in class, quality and quantity of discussions, research, and class attendance. Written material was evaluated for student understanding of international concepts as evidenced in research papers, presentations, and examinations.

Results showed that international knowledge, student learning, and engagement improved, as measured by quality and quantity of discussions, research, and class attendance. Student papers showed a broader focus, multiple viewpoints, and higher marks overall than the previous year’s class. Students said that they enjoyed doing research and enjoyed learning from each other’s presentations. Finally, contrary to expectations, class participation increased, not decreased, with the use of electronic social networks!

Papers showed more depth of understanding of international issues and included more international reference points and examples. Final report marks increased from 78% in 2008 to 89% in 2009.
Class participation increased from 58% to 77% based on increased numbers of online discussions. Numbers of students participating in in-class discussions also increased from 78% to 92%. Grading and other evaluations were done by the same instructor in both years.

Since the thesis of this research was that both teaching and learning should improve with electronic social networks, it is interesting to note that teaching evaluations improved in a few key areas as well. More students perceived the course to be “very interesting” and the “overall effectiveness” of the teacher improved. The technology was time-consuming initially, but was simple to maintain once the plans had been made and work was organized for both students and teaching assistants.

Conclusions

Our research questions were:

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of electronic social networks in education?
2. How can electronic social networks improve teaching?
3. How can electronic social networks improve learning?

The literature identified benefits of electronic social networks primarily for those students who had special needs or required distance education, such as those who are sick, disabled, or in remote areas. Those who are shy or introverted may be more comfortable with technology than a live classroom. Those who are home schooled or who cannot afford tuition can take advantage of free education on television. As well as these generic benefits, we saw that our students were more engaged and participated more online and in class.

Drawbacks of electronic social networks from the literature suggested low online participation, low class attendance, and that the instructors may not be taken seriously. None of these issues were a problem for our class. One other major drawback in the literature was that e-discussions need monitoring. In our experience, the instructors and teaching assistants enjoyed monitoring the discussions because they were able to see student progress through the term. Students were much more aware of international issues and better able to express themselves and support their arguments in an online forum at the end of the course. The monitoring is time-consuming, which can be an issue, but is rewarding in the long run.

Electronic social networks can improve teaching by monitoring or tracking student and teacher activity. Both quantity and quality of participation can be measured through electronic marking and feedback. Overall, there is less work for the teacher once the initial technical set-up is done. Recommendations for the inclusion of electronic social networks in teaching include the following ideas:

1. Organize online communities or groups. Students love the social connections.
2. Allow marks for both quantity and quality of online comments and discussion. Even minimal marks, such as 5%, encourage active participation.
3. Include pictures, audio, video, and text for sensory excitement.
4. Provide immediate feedback – answer questions in the discussion forum promptly and automate online testing and feedback.

Electronic social networks can improve learning by offering a safe, non-intimidating environment for student contributions. Students often write more thoughtful comments and more robust responses since they can take time to answer and since they know that others may be reading their work. Our students showed higher participation online and in class, which led to higher grades overall.

This work combined elements of student engagement and internationalization and incorporated active components into an existing course. Both engagement and marks improved for many students. Our results showed that electronic social networks do not appear to have the isolation problems of some computer work, perhaps because of their interactive
and communicative nature. There was no evidence of isolation, introversion, or lack of social skills with our students. Overall class participation increased, not decreased.

References


**Biography**

Anne Banks Pidduck is a faculty member in the David R. Cheriton School of Computer Science at the University of Waterloo. She has Doctorate and Master of Applied Science degrees in Management Sciences (Information Systems, Technology Management) and a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Waterloo. She is also registered as a Professional Engineer (P.Eng.) in Ontario. Research interests are in information systems management, software engineering, and electronic commerce.
For many in higher education, the syllabus has been viewed as a requisite document for teaching (i.e., part and parcel of delivering a course; required by one’s collective agreement): one that serves basically as an outline of topics to be covered, a weekly schedule, and a listing of tests and assignments with associated weightings. In more recent years, however, faculty have increasingly acknowledged the potential of the syllabus to serve as a document that can articulate the connections among learner/learning outcomes, assessments, course content, pedagogical practice, and the professor’s teaching philosophy – what Biggs (1996) calls “constructive alignment.” The educational literature mirrors a growing

**Introduction and Context**

Course syllabi play an important role in teaching, learning, and course design. They serve multiple functions and audiences and represent the end product of a scholarly process. In the following article, select findings from a mixed methods study examining how faculty and students conceptualize course syllabi are presented, specifically the design implications of what faculty include in their syllabi and those items students perceive to be most important and attend to most often throughout the course.

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Two Sides of the Same Coin:  
Student-Faculty Perspectives of the Course Syllabus
Student-Faculty Perspectives of the Course Syllabus

recognition of the multiple functions and potential of the syllabus to support teaching and learning. No longer just a precursor to outline and teach course content alone, the syllabus serves ever more complex functions and varied audiences. Parkes and Harris (2002) articulate three broad functions of a syllabus: a contract, a permanent record, and a learning aid, while Grunert O'Brien, Millis, and Cohen (2008) further refine these functions from a learning-centred perspective. Others still point to the syllabus as a communication device (Altman & Cashin, 1992; Garavalia, Hummel, Wiley, & Huitt, 1999; Matejka & Kurke, 1994) and as a roadmap (Nilson, 1998). Each function reflects a different educational purpose and speaks to the varied end-users of course syllabi (e.g., petition committees, other program instructors and potential students, accrediting bodies, academic support staff, and administrators, to name a few).

While traditionally the design of the syllabus has been guided by its audience (mainly students) and the organization of the course (Hockensmith, 1988), other influences, as suggested above, now come into play. Consequently, the design of one's syllabus necessitates a more learned and informed approach than might previously have been the case. Boyer's (1990) expanded conception of scholarship (i.e., teaching, integration, application, and discovery) provides a framework to capture the complexity and the scholarlyness associated with the syllabus and its design (Nilson, 2008; Shulman, 2004). To this end, the educational literature provides limited but helpful information in the form of syllabus checklists, research-informed best practices, and, to a lesser extent, reports from a small sample of studies examining course syllabi specifically in relation to their design, presentation, and pedagogical application.

With this context in mind, and a desire to have more institutionally specific data about what we know (or don't know) about the design and use of syllabi by professors and students, a group of faculty and educational developers from two primarily undergraduate Ontario universities came together in 2007/2008 to design and implement a syllabus study. A multi-pronged approach was taken, which included the following: 1) an item analysis of undergraduate and graduate course syllabi; 2) a content analysis of learning objectives; and 3) a survey of undergraduate and graduate students.

The confines of this article are too narrow to report fully on our methodology and all aspects of our analysis and findings. More detailed information on each research step, the associated research tools, as well as resources and some preliminary study findings are available at the project wiki: http://www.nutshell.wikispaces.com. Here, we offer insights from our research based on a comparison of what faculty actually include in their syllabi and what students deem to be important and attend to during the term. Insights, speculations, and recommendations are interwoven into the discussion, ending with some concluding thoughts and next steps.

What Do Instructors Include in Their Course Syllabi?

Assessing what professors typically include in their course syllabi constituted the first step in our research project. Naturally, we anticipated that certain items or categories of items would be consistently reported, and indeed this proved to be the case. We were less certain in our anticipation of the impact of personal, disciplinary, or professional influences on design. Table 1 provides highlights of items we discovered from our analysis of 361 syllabi (representing a broad spectrum of disciplines) and the approximate frequency (rounded-up/down) of their occurrence.

Not surprisingly, instructors were consistent in providing some types of information on their syllabi and less consistent in referencing others. The absence or presence of a given item and the degree to which it was reported left us with as many questions as answers. Without further instructor follow-up, the mere presence of an item did not reveal the reason for its inclusion, and the absence of an item did not preclude the possibility that the professor communicated that item to students in other ways. We could only speculate (and hope) that any item deemed to be important would be addressed either verbally in class, via email, on the course website, or in a handout. Fortunately, student feedback in the form of 300 plus com-
ments confirmed this to be the case; students identified detailed grading and assignment information as one, if not the most common, example to be elaborated on by their professor outside of the syllabus. Given its lower frequency of reporting (i.e., 32–36%), this finding is not surprising.

Learning objectives

We were surprised to discover that the provision of learning objectives on syllabi was not higher (only 69%). We anticipated objectives would receive greater mention (i.e., 80–100%) by faculty, as they form the basis of sound course design (i.e., what to include, how to organize, what and how to assess, etc.), are linked to improved student performance (see Schonfeld, Rasmussen, Nieto, & Sims, 1989), and are an expression of program-level objectives. Even in our content analysis of syllabi, only 60% (23 of 38 reviewed) had a separate section for course objectives – a finding consistent with Mager’s (1984) earlier reporting that little distinction is made by instructors between the course description (i.e., content and procedures) and the learning objectives (i.e., desired student learning). Thirty-plus years later we were surprised to see that this is still the case.

On the student side, objectives fell nearly last in what they reported looking at first (< 2%). While the students acknowledged their overall importance (76%), they referenced them only 17% of the time throughout the semester, and only slightly more (23% of the time) during the exam period. These findings overall suggest to us that faculty and students neither embrace nor value (or even know about) the pedagogical function of objectives. While it is possible that objectives may have been articulated to students by their professors during class time versus the syllabus, and that not all professors use the term “objectives,” these findings imply that more needs to be done systemically at the institutional, program, and individual level to situate and integrate the formation and application of objectives in teaching and learning. As a start, this can be done by crafting separate sections for the objectives and course description, and using the latter strategically to provide an overview of the course as well as a framework and context to position course objectives. From the latter, then, links to the assessments can clearly be drawn.

Table 1
Comparative Summary of Syllabus Items Referenced by Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More common items</th>
<th>Less common items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• list of assessments (99%)</td>
<td>• university policies (e.g., plagiarism 52%, special needs 48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• weightings of tests and assignments (97%)</td>
<td>• course/instructional approach (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• list of course readings (94%)</td>
<td>• detailed information about grading criteria (32%) and individual assessments as a whole (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• basic course and contact information (80–98%)</td>
<td>• course policies (e.g., attendance 33%, late assignments 25%, course conduct 10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• outline of course topics (86%)</td>
<td>• student success strategies (e.g., study suggestions 4%, additional materials such as formulas 2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• brief description of tests and assignments (86%)</td>
<td>• academic support services (e.g., writing 3%, learning 2%, library &lt; 1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evaluation deadlines (80%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• course description (76%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• course reading schedule (76%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• class meeting schedule (70%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• course objectives (69%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• university policies (e.g., plagiarism 52%, special needs 48%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• academic support services (e.g., writing 3%, learning 2%, library &lt; 1%)</td>
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</table>

What Do Students Think Should be Included in a Syllabus?

Assessment

One of several questions we asked students to rate
was the importance of various syllabus items (1 = least important, 5 = most important; refer to student survey\(^1\)). From a list of 18 items (reported most frequently in the literature and included in the item analysis tool), the top four ranked “most important” all had to do with assessment: a listing of course assessments with detailed guidelines and grading information (71%), a listing of assignment/test weightings (71%), a listing of course assessments/evaluations in general (80%), and assessment/evaluation due dates (82%). All but one of these items was included by faculty on their syllabi 80 to 99 percent of the time according to our item analysis. The exception had to do with the provision of detailed grading and assessment information. For this item, faculty were half as likely (35%) to provide the information that students deemed most important (71%) even though, as noted previously, there was some indication from students’ written comments that this was addressed by other means during the course. Responses to two other survey questions reinforced the importance of assessment information to students: one, that students looked at the percentage weightings (24%) and the list of course assessments (23.5%) first and second respectively when viewing a syllabus for the first time, and two, that they consistently attended to assessment information (including grading criteria, due dates, etc.) throughout the semester. Only scheduling information outranked assessment information in the first third (i.e., weeks 1 to 4) of the term by a slim margin.

These findings suggest that assessment is a central feature and information piece for inclusion in a syllabus, and that more rather than less information is desired by students. In terms of design, instructors may want to consider placing a listing of course assessments with their associated weightings at the beginning of their syllabus, and more detailed information aimed at supporting the learning process and learner success, in the latter part or appendix of their syllabus. Here, the flexibility of an online syllabus to offer more robust information may be worthy of consideration, especially in light of comparative data from a 2003 study (see Parkes, Fix, & Harris, 2003) revealing that preference for a paper-only syllabus has decreased by half (88.5% then, 42% now), preference for the availability of both a paper and an electronic version has increased more than six-fold (7% then, 46% now), and preference for an electronic syllabus alone has tripled (4% then, 13% now).

**Scheduling**

Following assessment, the next “most important” set of items ranked by students were scheduling related (i.e., reading 49%, meeting 36%, learning activities, 30%). From there, contact information (39%), student responsibilities (32.5%), course information (27%), the course description (27%), and learning materials (26%) came next. Other than student expectations and responsibilities (57%), the aforementioned items were consistently represented by faculty in their syllabi 70 or more percent of the time. In terms of what students “attended to most” during the semester (versus ranked important), scheduling information placed first or second throughout the term, and third during the exam period, thereby underscoring the importance of this information. Learning materials too were consistently ranked third throughout the semester, reinforcing their perceived importance, while general course information had primacy in the first third of the term (4th of 11 items) only. What this suggests is a need for greater transparency (e.g., detailed scheduling information and expectations) and specificity in syllabi to guide students in navigating the course and achieving the desired learning outcomes.

**Other findings of interest**

Not surprisingly, those items deemed least important by students were related to policy (10%) and support services information (9%). Comparatively, reference to course and university policies by professors ranged from four to 52 percent (even mandated policies such as academic misconduct and special needs), while support services information was rarely mentioned at all, the exception being a campus safe-walk program. As a contract, the importance of policy information

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\(^1\) Survey available at http://nutshell.wikispaces.com/Student+Survey
within a syllabus cannot be overestimated, as the syllabus often forms the basis of decisions in petition cases when issues such as grade disputes arise. As such, policy information may best be located near the end of the syllabus or within the section to which it is related (e.g., late assignments policy in the assessment section). Perhaps the status of policy statements and support services information would be higher if these elements were included in syllabi more often and reinforced by other means (e.g., integrated into class activities and discussion).

What Else Did Students Tell Us?

Use of syllabus

Beyond what students attended to most during the term and items they considered to be most important for inclusion in course syllabi, we learned that students use the syllabus in various ways: as a reference tool (88%), time management tool (80%), study tool (53%), and documentation tool (32%). Given the emphasis placed on scheduling information and assessment due dates, the first and second uses are in alignment with what has already been reported on above. One example shared by students in this regard was the collation of schedules into one master document, whether cut-and-pasted manually if paper-based, or electronically if provided online. This, they reported, helped them to plan and manage course information in their preferred way. The syllabus as study tool was less straightforward. While the subject matter to be studied is standard content in most syllabi, the availability of objectives (of which the quality and clarity ranged considerably) and study supports (e.g., practice questions, study tips, rubrics, strategies for learning in the discipline – see Parkes & Harris, 2002) to guide student learning, ranged from moderately present to non-existent. Greater attention, therefore, to the learning tool function of the syllabus is needed (both on paper and its use in class) to support learners, especially in light of findings that significantly more first-year students – inexperienced university learners – than fourth-year students (p = .036) reported using the syllabus as a study aid. Finally, in the context of the syllabus as a documentation tool, students commented that they used their syllabus as a recording device (e.g., to record assignment and test grades).

Two final items worthy of note speak to factors which most influence a student’s decision to take a given course and the learner’s perception of what constitutes a user-friendly document. Of the 13 influences (refer to survey) students had to choose from, eight were directly related to the syllabus. Of these eight, the course description and overview were primary (39%), followed by assessment information (17–28.5%), instructor approach (23%), and the amount of readings (16%). Based on the more than 800 comments about syllabus user-friendliness, the design elements students most appreciated included clarity (i.e., language and format), conciseness (i.e., complete information), consistency of formatting (e.g., sub/headings, bulleted items, font size/type), sound organization (e.g., easy to locate specific information or sections), and a friendly but professional tone (e.g., approachable language). Again, each of these findings has implications for design that move the syllabus from its contractual and permanent document functions to syllabus as learning aid.

Summary and Conclusions

So, what does this all mean? Well, in terms of what professors include in their syllabi and what students look for, use, and need, there is alignment in many cases between the two. Having said this, we have provided several recommendations to aid in the design of course syllabi and identified areas in the discussion above where stronger linkages can be made and reinforcement by other means (which may already be happening) integrated into the teaching and learning process. In this, we concur with other educational scholars (Nilson, 2008; Shulman, 2004) that the design of a syllabus should be scholarly in approach and that syllabus authors should strategically consider the full range of syllabus functions, pedagogical applications (e.g., teaching tool), and the multitude of potential end-users given the teaching context, subject matter, and discipline.

As our research has raised as many questions
as answers, we continue to analyze the data collected so far, while at the same time explore a second phase of research that involves follow-up with faculty with a specific focus on objectives and syllabus construction, and how they conceive their relationship to teaching, learning, and curricular design more broadly.

Individually and collectively the project team has gained so much already, resulting in changes to what we include in our own syllabi, how we use them in our practice, and how we support others in the design of syllabi and their placement within the larger context of academic programs and the institution as a whole.

Special Thanks

The authors would like to acknowledge the work and support of the research assistants associated with this project: Sandra Ayerst and Kendra Hollidge of Wilfrid Laurier University, and Divine Afflu of Lakehead University.

References


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Supportive learning environments and student engagement have come to the forefront of post-secondary education, particularly within the field of the scholarship of teaching and learning. However, university and college programs and structures still reflect the traditional disciplinary focus on knowledge development and transfer.

Meaning — realizing something of creative, experiential, or attitudinal value (Frankl, 1985), and wisdom — the “capacity to realize what is of value in life for oneself and others” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 2), only recently have been rediscovered as potential ends of university education and as objects of their own rights in research and practice of higher education (Barnett & Maxwell, 2008; Ferrari & Potworowski, 2008; Kronman, 2007).

Based on the author’s recent research (Mengel, 2007, 2008; Mengel, Cowan-Sahadath, & Follert, 2009), this paper makes the case for a shift of undergraduate education towards the development of meaningful life skills that are of value to the graduates as well as to the communities they live in. First, relevant connections between student learning, meaning, and wisdom will be made. Second, the article will explore how undergraduate education can more holistically and comprehensively support students in learning meaningfully and in developing elements of wisdom. In particular, the paper will suggest principles that allow the meaningful integration of learning outcomes, experiential learning opportunities, reflection, and assessment.

Introduction

Supportive learning environments and student engagement have come to the forefront of post-secondary education, particularly within the field of the scholarship of teaching and learning. However, university and college programs and structures still reflect the traditional disciplinary focus on knowledge development and transfer. Meaning — realizing something of creative, experiential, or attitudinal value (Frankl, 1985), and wisdom — the “capacity to realize what is of value in life for oneself and others” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 2), only recently have been rediscovered as potential ends of university education and as objects of their own rights in research and practice of higher education (Barnett & Maxwell, 2008; Ferrari & Potworowski, 2008; Kronman, 2007).
Student Learning

According to recent publications on the scholarship of teaching and learning, student learning needs to be constructive, cumulative, self-regulated, goal-oriented, situated, collaborative, transformative, integrative, interactive, challenging, experiential, and meaningful (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Huber & Hutchings, 2005; Kuh, 2003; Mentkowski, 2000; NSSE, 2008). In particular, student learning should be focused on acquiring abilities that are a complex combination of motivation, disposition, attitudes, values, strategies, behaviours, self perception, knowledge of concepts, and knowledge of procedures (Mentkowski, 2000). As a consequence, student learning requires teaching that feeds the various “intelligences” that address these components – cognitive, emotional, as well as spiritual intelligence – and that taps into knowledge within the respective various dimensions: expertise, management knowledge, as well as leadership knowledge and wisdom (Mengel, 2007). To do so, our efforts in regard to facilitating student learning obviously have to improve on helping students to discover meaning and to make meaningful connections as well as on developing wisdom.

Meaning and Meaningful Learning

In his seminal work *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl (1985) identified the search for meaning as the primary motivation for human beings. He suggested that we discover meaning in what we do by realizing creative values (e.g., creating something at work or in our learning environment), in what we experience by realizing experiential values (e.g., experiencing meaningful relationships in our personal and professional lives), and in what we believe and think by realizing attitudinal values (e.g., developing new and healthy attitudes when suffering professional setbacks or personal crises). Furthermore, he proposes that we discover meaning by answering the questions “why?” and “what for?” based on our personality and on the situational context we find ourselves in; hence, our personal situation needs to guide our discovery. Finally, this discovery process as well as professional practice require the development of the underlying abilities in the areas of spiritual intelligence in general and the development of wisdom in particular (Mengel, 2007).

Wisdom and Wisdom Development

Various wisdom traditions and definitions appear to gravitate towards two foci: wisdom as “knowledge” about how to live and about how the world works. Most concepts highlight the importance of balance and of a meaningful relationship with one’s environment; many agree on the significance of living according to human nature while they may differ in terms of the detailed interpretation of this concept. This clearly requires development and practice of abilities around knowing oneself and knowing others through continuous training and “askesis.” In some religious traditions concepts of wisdom do include an otherworldly or divine focus. Some highlight the importance of withdrawal and meditation as a means of participating in divine wisdom (Curnow, 2008).

The scientific approach of modernity resulted in a shift from looking for meaning to researching facts and thus put concepts of wisdom onto the back seat of scholarly endeavours. However, wisdom appears to experience a post-modern revival within and across various disciplines as indicated through various recent definitions of wisdom (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Maxwell, 2008; Peterson & Park, 2008; Stange & Kunzmann, 2008; Sternberg, Jarvin, & Reznitskaya, 2008). On a high level, the “Berlin wisdom model” (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000) defines wisdom as “exceptional insight into the human condition and meaning of life” (Stange & Kunzmann, 2008, p. 24), and in much more detail, suggests various basic criteria around expert knowledge and wisdom specific meta criteria. In their “balance theory of wisdom,” Sternberg et al. (2008) describe wisdom as the “use of one’s intelligence, creativity, and knowledge as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good
through a balance among (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, and (c) extrapersonal interests, over the (a) short and (b) long terms to achieve a balance among (a) adaptation to existing environments, (b) shaping of existing environments, and (c) selection of new environments” (p. 38). Peterson and Park (2008) in their approach of “positive psychology” identify wisdom to be the “ability to judge correctly in matters relating to life and conduct and/or understanding of what is true, meaningful or lasting” (p. 59). Finally, the British philosopher Maxwell (2008) urges political leaders and academic institutions to shift from knowledge to “wisdom inquiry” and defines wisdom as the “capacity to realize what is of value in life for oneself and others” (p. 2). He further suggests engaging in a cooperative process of applying and developing that capacity through learning how to well articulate problems of living and through proposing and assessing possible solutions (wise problem solving).

Implications for Education:
Principles of Meaningful Learning

In order to achieve the required progression from knowledge to wisdom, any growth of university graduates or professionals in terms of traditional disciplinary knowledge has to be matched by a respective development of interdisciplinary and practical wisdom. First and foremost we need to shift from a model of individual knowledge transfer and assessment to an approach that goes beyond valuing students’ abilities to maximize their own attainments by also valuing students’ abilities to maximize attainment of others and to contribute to solving problems of life; our teaching needs to reward demonstration of wisdom as much as it rewards demonstration of academic knowledge. Furthermore, teaching for wisdom needs to help students learn how to balance competing interests and goals in the process of problem solving and to encourage them to form, critique, and integrate their own and others’ values in their thinking and decision-making. Finally, students need to learn to think dialectically and dialogically and to search for and try to reach the common good. This can effectively only be achieved by an integrated curriculum and by considering yet challenging individual learning styles and personal preferences.

In particular, learning that matters, that contributes to solving problems of life, and has both individual as well as communal significance, needs to be designed around the following principles:

1. What is being learned has to be meaningful to both students and to the communities that the learners are part of. An ability based set of learning outcomes provides students and their communities with a transparent framework that allows them to make sense and discover meaning (Menktowski, 2000; Zundel et al., 2006). Within this outcome-based learning environment students need to be “doing” (creative values) and “experiencing” (experiential values) something meaningful as well as developing meaningful “attitudes” (attitudinal values) towards something within the context of both self and others and in particular in regard to the relationship of self and others.

Therefore, the learning context needs to be set up to include elements and challenges from the students’ and their communities’ current life situation. It also has to be linked to the context of their programs’ learning outcomes. Finally, the learning environment has to actively consider the different personal learning styles and preferences.

In addition, the process of learning has to be set up to contribute to building and developing communities, to collaboratively solve problems of importance to communities, and to engage in the public discourse about significant issues.

2. Learning outcomes serve as a framework for student assessment and feedback. This framework will allow integrating assessment on a course as well as on a program level. It will also include the assessment of and feedback on personal growth as well as on the competency to contribute to the development of communities.

3. Teaching and learning needs to include elements that address both the individual and social aspects of learning and that are well balanced and spread around the Kolb Learning Cycle (1984). A balanced offering of group work, individual
reflections, logical analyses, and active experimentations or fieldwork may serve this purpose.

Furthermore, these elements need to appeal to different personalities. This may be achieved through a mix of competitive tasks, cooperative assignments, and individual assignments on social, scientific, technological, and business topics. Finally, the elements need to be designed to allow for, to integrate, and to evaluate the discovery of creative, experiential, and attitudinal values. The learning environment needs to encourage students to create important results and relevant solutions, to experience meaningful relationships, and to develop healthy attitudes, particularly in the context of challenges, conflicts, and crises.

4. Meaningful assignments will assess student learning based on respective learning outcomes including both individual as well as social dimensions. In particular, they will consider various learning styles and personalities as well as individual and community settings. Finally, these assignments will speak to creative, experiential, and attitudinal values both within an individual as well as a community context.

5. Meaningful feedback will address student performance consistently based on respective outcome criteria. It also will consider the student’s learning style and personality by explicitly acknowledging strengths and addressing opportunities for growth. Finally, it will address instances (as demonstrated by the student within the assignment) and opportunities (yet to be developed) for the discovery and realization of values in regard to self, to others, and to the relationship between self and others.

Summary

Teaching must comprehensively address cognitive, emotional, and spiritual intelligence to allow for student learning that is meaningful and matters to both the learners involved as well as to the communities that these learners are part of. Meaningful learning is supported by learning environments that encourage students to create something meaningful, to have valuable experiences with something or someone, and to acquire new and meaningful attitudes (Frankl, 1985). Wisdom development will help students grow their “capacity to realize what is of value in life for oneself and others” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 2).

Within this context, learning outcomes need to reflect both individual growth and its potential to contribute the learners’ communities. Furthermore, these learning outcomes also should serve as the framework for continuous and consistent feedback and assessment. Finally, the learning environment in general as well as the learning activities and assessment opportunities in particular ought to be well balanced around the Kolb Learning Cycle (1984) and to address the different learning preferences and personalities of all learners. While this comprehensive approach to meaningful learning and wisdom development goes far beyond the simple transfer of knowledge, learning that matters may better contribute to solving problems significant to individuals and to their communities alike.

References


**Biography**

Thomas Mengel is Associate Professor of Leadership Education, Renaissance College, at the University of New Brunswick. He has been involved in both teaching and learning in some form or other for more than 30 years. Thomas holds academic degrees in theology, adult education, history, and computer science. Before joining academia full-time in 2005, he held various project management and leadership positions and worked as a consultant in different European and North American organizations. His major focus is on project management and leadership education.
Traditionally, liberal arts have influenced undergraduate education. It is “designed to give students foundational knowledge that equips them to make free, informed choices about themselves and the world in which they live” (Barker, 2003, p. 248). However, professional disciplines such as Social Work, although influenced by the liberal arts, have developed largely distinct, separate professional programs of study. Joy Mighty (2009) makes the point that enormous “social, political, economic, and environmental problems that face the global community demand remedies and solutions that exceed the capacity of any single discipline or specialization.” Citing Klein (1998), Mighty explains that interdisciplinary approaches transcend the limits of single disciplines to increase our capacity to understand and address problems that are too complex for one discipline.

There is a high level of compatibility between the values and ethics of Social Work and Disability Studies. Both have a commitment to social advocacy, social change, and client empowerment. Both focus on strengths rather than pathology, and each one is committed to diversity and the elimination of oppression (Gilson & DePoy, 2002). Both Social Work and Disability Studies promote respect for individuality, dignity, acceptance, self-determination, and empowerment.

Social Work uses approaches to intervention with vulnerable populations, such as, the person-
in-environment, strengths, and anti-oppressive perspectives. The person-in-environment perspective “views the client as part of an environmental system” (Barker, 2003, p. 322), taking into account social relationships and other influences. Saleebey (2006) articulated a strengths approach in which “the central dynamic of the strengths perspective is precisely the rousing of hope” (p. 8) that empowers people to address their own problems and to develop their own problem-solving skills to deal with adversity and stress. Anti-oppressive practice “focuses on both confronting and changing those social institutions, policies, laws, and economic and political systems that operate in a way that benefits the dominant group at the expense of subordinate groups” (Mullaly, 2002, p. 193).

Disability Studies deconstructs medicalized disability, locating the problem of disability in society’s failure to provide for people with disabilities rather than individuals’ limitations (Oliver, 1990). Disability Studies offers a social construct model and a diversity model in working with people with disabilities. The social construct model explores the nature of oppression and its meaning for the individual, helps people to see that oppression is socially grounded, and works to lessen the effects of oppression (Rothman, 2003). The disability discrimination model sees impairment associated with disability as the result of discrimination, poverty, and marginalizing services, such as special education and group homes (May & Raske, 2005). The disability discrimination model uses a framework that includes a blend of the strengths perspective, empowerment, resiliency, and the medical model to support individual, relationship, and societal change.

Like Disability Studies, Social Work must find more effective ways of removing obstacles to inclusion for people with disabilities and to address the increasing societal demand to include those with disabilities in the larger culture. Social Work must include disability, along with gender, race, and class, in their professional education about diversity (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007). The authors suggest Social Work should strengthen its long-standing tradition of interdisciplinary Disability Studies.

**Historical Perspective of Social Work and Disability Studies**

The discipline of Social Work and the area of Disability Studies share perspectives and goals. Both have historically integrated knowledge from the arts and social sciences. Disability activists and academics alike have begun to question the fundamentals of both service delivery and professional practices with regard to people with disabilities. Although compatible in approach, the study of disability has not, until recently, been broached by the field of Social Work. In a survey of 17 Bachelor programs and 15 Master’s programs from 22 out of 31 accredited Canadian Schools of Social Work, Burge, Druick, Caron, and Ouellette-Kuntz (1998) looked at coursework and field experiences. They found 79.2% of Bachelor and Master’s level field placements had no focus on serving people with developmental disabilities. Given that 0.8% of the general Canadian population has a developmental disability, Burge et al. (1998) stressed the need for social workers to gain knowledge about the issues and values that are important to people with developmental disabilities.

In examining how Canadian Schools of Social Work have responded to disability issues, Dunn, Hanes, Hardie, Leslie, and Macdonald (2008) found the need for enhancement, despite some recent improvements. They found obvious barriers to the inclusion of those with disabilities in terms of recruitment, admissions, accommodations, retention, graduation, employment, and curriculum. In addition to the issues faced by students, there were also issues around hiring faculty and staff with disabilities, and university relations and resources. Dunn et al. (2008) recommended that Social Work explore issues of accessibility and accommodation and develop best practices to ensure effective implementation – for example, Schools of Social Work could train faculty in Universal Instructional Design (UID), an approach familiar to instructors in Disability Studies. Instructors who employ the principles of UID in course design and delivery consider the potential needs of all learners (Burgstahler, 2008). Integrating the Disability Studies curriculum with Social Work
allows opportunities for instructors to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to teaching and learning for all students in both programs, while preserving academic rigor (Coomber, 2007).

The School of Social Work at the University of Windsor is an example of an academic program that has moved ahead in creating, developing, and promoting an inclusive environment. For instance, a course on disability, developed by Donald Leslie (2008), reflects an interdisciplinary approach, using the social model and principles of UID. Leslie furthered this endeavor by taking a leadership role in spearheading collaborative efforts between the Department of Psychology and School of Social Work. This project culminated in the development of the Interdisciplinary Disability Studies Program.

The University of Windsor
Interdisciplinary Disability Studies Program

The Interdisciplinary Honours Degree in Disability Studies at the University of Windsor, introduced in September 2008, is based on the social model of disability. The Disability Studies Program is consistent with the commitment to accessibility, diversity, and social justice that is reflected in legislation that recognizes Canadian society is strengthened by including all its citizens (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982; Ontario Persons with Disabilities Act, 2001). In June 2005, the Ontario government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which sets as a goal the removal of all barriers to full participation in the life of the province by the year 2025. There are few areas of study that prepare graduates to play a significant role in the planning for, and implementation of, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The creation of an Interdisciplinary Disability Studies Program was therefore thought necessary, and was put in place to serve an important function in transforming past injustice and continuing to remove barriers which keep people with disabilities from full participation in society.

The push to address existing oppression is consistent with the human rights approach, and it was identified that a program was needed to produce graduates with expertise in many areas relevant to this goal. Disability Studies is designed to support, model, and promote inclusion. The program equips graduates to heighten their capacity to work effectively in the broad areas of disability policy, accessibility, and service delivery. These objectives are made possible by participation in required courses that are reflective of various disciplines. These disciplines include Social Justice Studies, Science, English, Political Science, Dramatic Art, History, Music, Philosophy, Nursing, Psychology, and Social Work. Wherever possible, students choose elective courses according to their area of interest in Disability Studies. However, all students take the following five core Disability Studies courses:

- **Theories of Disability and the Social Model**
  - Explores models of disability and critically examines assumptions that have shaped traditional responses.

- **Historical Approaches to People with Disabilities**
  - Highlights people, events, and legislation that have affected disability rights, including the eugenics movement, the civil rights movement, etc.

- **Community Approaches, Advocacy & Empowerment**
  - Reviews the role of Disability Studies and explores interventions that promote full participation, including empowerment and advocacy.

- **Service Delivery Systems and Independent Living**
  - Analyzes power, inequality, and influence, and promotes a team approach with community living and consumer leaders.

- **Community Practice**
  - Encourages students to put the social model into practice, building strategies for actions and promoting a team approach.
These core Disability Studies courses, as well as other required interdisciplinary courses reflecting the social model of disability, make use of the social model of disability and deconstructivism. The social model of disability, created by “a small but influential group of disabled activists” in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s (Shakespeare, 1998, p.72), described people with disabilities as an oppressed, marginalized, non-ethnic minority. Morris (2001) clarifies that personal experiences of being denied opportunities are not explained by bodily limitations, but by disabling social, environmental, and attitudinal barriers. The social model moved disability policy away from labeling people with disabilities to addressing “environmental and social barriers which exclude people with perceived impairments from mainstream society” (Shakespeare, 1998, p.78).

Barker (2003) defined deconstructivism as “a method of analysis in which the underlying assumptions and perceptions of phenomena are taken apart and reexamined, especially to each component and its relation to all other relevant components” (p.11). Employing a deconstructionist approach in an interdisciplinary environment, Disability Studies espouses learning outcomes that promote student recognition of systemic barriers to full participation for persons with disabilities in society’s social, economic, and political institutions. It does this by examining theories and approaches used to explain differential or discriminatory treatment of disability groups within the context of a social model of disability. It assists students in identifying and removing barriers to full participation for people with disabilities. It allows students to relate to the needs of persons with disabilities as expressed through the disability movement’s credo: “nothing about us without us.”

Using deconstructivism, the social model of disability has shown that negative social factors, and not the disability, restrict participation, and that progressive social policy can lessen and address oppression (Goodley, 2000). The social model has been influential in the lives of people with disabilities. It resulted in legislation and laws that outlawed discrimination based on a person’s characteristics, requiring public agencies to manage programs in the most integrated fashion possible so as to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Similarities Between Social Work and Disability Studies

Disability Studies, using the social model of disability, fits with the overall goals and objectives of Social Work. The missions of Schools of Social Work (CASWE, 2008; CSWE, 2008) include the promotion of social justice through quality professional education, advocacy, community partnerships, and to develop and spread knowledge through inquiry. Promoting the social model of disability, a major objective of Disability Studies, is consistent with this mission. Like Disability Studies, the goals of Social Work reach beyond the educational needs of the individual student to promote social justice for the disabled population and their community.

The objectives of Social Work and Disability Studies are similar as both provide a learning environment that includes awareness of the social construction of theory and its application. These objectives promote the acquisition and continued development of knowledge, values, and skills for ethical generalist practice with oppressed, marginalized, and vulnerable populations. Also, these objectives aim to inspire students to take responsibility for using their knowledge, values, and skills in pursuit of social justice and human rights with a focus on issues of diversity, equity, accessibility, and other anti-oppressive practices. Both Social Work and Disability Studies encourage students to develop a commitment to, and understanding of, how self-reflection, creativity, critical inquiry, and evidence-based practice impact the practicing professional; and encourage students to understand current practice realities in historical, socio/political, economic, and environmental contexts. Each program fosters students’ abilities to recognize structural barriers created by society through social inequities, environmental issues, and regional disparities, and directs them to build a commitment to social advocacy, social change, and client empowerment.

Bachelor of Social Work Program objectives reflect anti-oppressive approaches to interacting with people with disabilities. In addition, the desire to individualize and respect each client clearly mirrors the
need to show respect and acceptance for the differences embodied in all people including those with disabilities. Overall, there is a strong match between Social Work values and ethics, and the respectful approach needed to adopt a social model of disability.

**Enriching Social Work Through Disability Studies**

Disability programs add value to professional Social Work by reaffirming the shift away from individual deficiency (Gilson & DePoy, 2002). Interdisciplinary Disability Studies increases the emphasis on constructionist approaches, which are essential to Social Work’s mission (Martinez-Brawley, 1999). The increased integration of a liberal arts creative, critical, constructivist perspective, such as that found in Disability Studies, transcends practice techniques in therapeutic endeavors and is recognized as essential by the Canadian Association of Social Work Education and the Council of Social Work Education (Mazza, 1986). Implications for Social Work training and practice include the need for knowledge of disabilities and approaches to policy advocacy and empowerment.

Disability scholars view Social Work as needing to adopt a view of disability that is in line with the ways in which they have traditionally looked upon gender, race, and class. Using various approaches, social workers employ ways to challenge issues and counter oppression. Social Work uses a strengths perspective to empower individuals, groups, families, and communities (Saleebey, 2006). The emphasis on human capacity and self-empowerment is consistent with a solution-focused approach and with Social Work’s historical values. The focus on socioeconomic reasons for client problems, obvious in the structural approach, allows the opportunity for social workers to look for possibilities where change can take place, and for the ability to move beyond generalist practice and toward social activism (Heinonen & Spearman, 2006). Disability Studies programs offer courses that reflect Social Work practice and add to the training of social workers who can work as advocates for people with disabilities.

Disability Studies offers opportunities for social workers to become empowered through collaboration. In order for awareness to be transformed into inclusion, recognition of past injustices must occur. Furthermore, continuing barriers to full participation need to be translated into empowering experiences and present barriers must also be removed. Professionals in health, education, and social service agencies need interdisciplinary skills to collaborate with individuals with disabilities in promoting new legislation, identifying the need for policy changes, and supporting further research. Multiple perspectives prove more useful than those from any one field when challenging assumptions about disability (Ware, 2001). Developing a collaborative relationship between Social Work and Disability Studies also fortifies the Social Work profession against other helping professions that are incorporating its theories and practice. Further, as there is a global focus on disability and issues of accessibility, collaboration between Social Work and Disability Studies is timely and must be promoted.

**Future Direction**

Schools of Social Work currently vary widely in their commitments to preparing students to practice with individuals with disabilities. There is a need to develop a *Best Practice Manual* for setting up Disability Studies curricula and combining it with Social Work programs (Liese, Clevenger, & Hanley, 1999). Social Work and Disability Studies need to work creatively to ensure that Social Work incorporates practice strategies to enable graduating students to work effectively with people with disabilities. As the area of Disability Studies develops and evolves, opportunities to explore ways of integrating Social Work and Disability Studies Programs should be seized. Creative choices include a Combined Social Work and Disability Studies degree, a minor in Disability Studies, and a certificate program in Disability Studies. These integrative approaches would enrich the profession of Social Work with graduates who would be prepared to work with people with disabilities, and would also serve to add relevance and value to the Social Work degree.
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**Biographies**

Irene Carter, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in School of Social Work, and Program Coordinator, Disability Studies, at the University of Windsor. Her main areas of interest are social support for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, disability studies, and self-help groups.

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Section III

Development and Transitions
High to Low Tide:
The High School–University Transition

David C. Stone
University of Toronto

In this paper I summarize some key findings from a three-year study of the high school-university transition for students attending a large arts and science faculty, within the context of their first university chemistry course. I then discuss these results within the broader context of research on success in higher education. Final conclusions are drawn from both my own observations and participant discussion from the session at the 2009 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) conference at the University of New Brunswick.

Considering

Every year, a large cohort of students arrives at this institution from high school with high grades and higher expectations. Many of these students intend to pursue a life sciences degree, with the ultimate aim of a professional medical career. As a result, some 1,500 to 1,800 students enrol annually in our first-year chemistry courses. This is a relatively smooth transition for some, but extremely traumatic for others who find that high school excellence does not translate into university success. While many instructors grumble about the declining quality of students, or their lack of work ethic and sense of “entitlement,” this really does not do justice to the majority of students who devote long hours to their studies. What, then, are we to make of that sizeable group of students who, despite their best efforts, find themselves failing those courses that are so essential to their dreams? And, more importantly, what can we do to identify and assist those who, in the words of one student, come to feel that university is the “place where hopes and dreams come to die”?

Getting an Education…

The genesis of this paper comes from an educational research project I began in 2006 to look specifically at those students taking first-year chemistry (Stone, 2009). The goal of this mixed-mode study was to an-
swer the questions:

1. What factors contribute to a successful high school–university transition?
2. What can schools and universities do to help students manage this transition?

Over a three-year period, 1,270 out of 5,356 students enrolled in one of three first-year chemistry courses during the Fall semester completed on-line questionnaires. Additionally, some 40 students participated in semi-structured group interviews run by second-year students through our undergraduate research opportunity program. For the second and third years of this study, I was also able to match individual student surveys with final course grades.

In some respects, the survey findings were unsurprising, particularly given current trends in university admissions and the competition for admission to our life science programs (Table 1). The majority of students completed high school in Ontario, obtaining high marks in Grade 12 chemistry with an average around 87%. Students experience substantial “sticker shock” when they see university large class averages for the first time: for the two single-semester courses taught here, the averages over the study period were 67% and 64%, respectively. Of course, many quite rightly expect university to be harder than high school – though individually not expecting to find it that much harder! In fact, students report being warned to expect a drop of from 10 to 20 percentage points in grade average from high school. What is disturbing is the number of students who experience a much greater drop in academic achievement (Figure 1). Indeed, fully one quarter of students participating in the survey reported their chemistry grade dropping from 30 to 60 percentage points – and that does not include those who did not write the final exam. Such a reversal of academic fortunes is clearly devastating for the student, and has significant implications for student engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

Table 1

*Summary of Survey Cohort Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2006/7</th>
<th>2007/8</th>
<th>2008/9</th>
<th>Aggregate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of survey cohort:</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>1803</td>
<td>1723</td>
<td>5356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response rate:</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male:</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female:</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL students:</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario students:</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular curriculum:</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semestered program:</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean HS grade ± s (%):</td>
<td>87.3 ± 10.6</td>
<td>87.1 ± 7.1</td>
<td>87.3 ± 7.2</td>
<td>87.3 ± 7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean CHM138(^1) grade:</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean CHM139(^2) grade:</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) *Introduction to Organic Chemistry*  
\(^2\) *General & Physical Chemistry*
So why do so many students fail despite arriving with excellent high school grades? More importantly, why do they perform poorly in a course (CHM139) that, on paper, overlaps significantly with the high school curriculum taken by the majority of those students? Demographic factors certainly play a role, but seem unlikely to account for the wide spread in grades relative to high school as these will have already contributed to the degree of self-selection associated with the study cohort. For comparison, a recent US study of 12 universities and colleges found that demographic factors made relatively minor contributions compared to academic scores (Tai, Sadler, & Loehr, 2005; Tai, Ward, & Sadler, 2006); yet even the most complete model accounted for only 38% of the inherent variation between students in terms of final grades.

In fact, the relationship between high school and university grades in chemistry (as well as physics, mathematics, and biology) has been studied for over 80 years with broadly similar results: students who do well in college or university chemistry are, on average, more likely to have done well in high school chemistry and mathematics than other students. The converse, however, is not necessarily true. In fact, there is a very poor correlation between actual high school and first-year grades. In the words of one reviewer:

There is some indication that taking high school chemistry may be used as an indi-
cator of success in college chemistry. There are indications that a math/physics background, high placement scores, achievement tests scores, intelligence, and age may be better, or at least as good, as indicators. There is also evidence that no indicator is all that accurate. (Ogden, 1976, pp. 125)

Given the parallel extensive research on teaching methods, together with the many reform initiatives launched throughout North America and Europe over the same period, it is disheartening to find that this observation still holds true 30 years later.

Gaining an Education...

Just as there has been a long history of research into the value of high school as preparation for college or university chemistry, so there have been numerous attempts to identify at-risk students and implement appropriate interventions. One recurring theme has been the use of diagnostic and placement tests, combined with either streaming within a single course structure (Cornog & Stoddard, 1925; Everhart & Ebaugh, 1925), or diversion into alternate or supplementary courses (Hovey & Krohn, 1958; Ozsogomonyan & Loftus, 1979; Russell, 1994).

One particularly important aspect of the 1958 study by Hovey & Krohn is the nature of the course to which at-risk students were directed. While this used chemistry as a context, the course emphasized study skills essential to success in any program: reading for comprehension; basic mathematics (algebraic manipulation); use of prior knowledge to interpret observations; and efficient use of study time.

This echoes the theme of alternate research on student success that emphasizes a student’s learning style or approach to both learning in general and specific learning tasks. The underlying model is a synthesis of work by Pask, Marton & Säljö, and Biggs, amongst others (see Entwistle, 2010 and references therein). In this context, style refers not to the traditional visual-auditory-kinesthetic categorization, but to a student’s assumptions about learning, their intentions, motivation, and orientation (deep versus surface, etc.). One outcome of this work is the “approaches and study skills inventory for students” (ASSIST) questionnaire (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). This has been used to identify at-risk students during their first semester at college or university (Tait & Entwistle, 1996), and test the effectiveness of learning skills interventions (Ramsden, Beswick, & Bowden, 1986). Results from the ASSIST questionnaire and related instruments confirm what many of us would intuitively expect: that a significant – even major – contribution to a successful high school–university transition is the set of study skills a student arrives with, and his/her ability to acquire and adapt those skills as necessary in post-secondary education.

This last point is confirmed by my own study: overwhelmingly, students who felt well-prepared for university commented on their teachers’ efforts to instil good study habits and emphasize comprehension over recall. Similarly, students from Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses described the main advantage of such programs as better preparation for the pace and intensity of university courses, rather than the content knowledge acquired (although the latter certainly helps). On the other hand, conversations with students who have failed first-year chemistry – often for the second or third time – reveal individuals who persist with ineffective study strategies, and often struggle to use basic mathematical skills in other contexts. Students comment frequently that grade 12 should have been more challenging; there is a widespread sense that high school was “too easy” as students often did not have to take responsibility for their own learning. Similar findings are also emerging from the College Mathematics Project, where student discussion panels focused on accountability for learning (Schollen, Orpwood, Sinclair, & Assiri, 2009). Essentially, this includes those abilities and attitudes encompassed in the “Learning Skills” section of the Ontario student report card, but that are expressly not included in reported course grades. As Schollen et al. (2009) point out:

[T]eachers in secondary school and college can profit by a much deeper understanding of the different philosophies of teach-
ing and learning that underlie their institutions. There are differences ... in the ways mathematical concepts are represented in the classroom, there are differences in approaches to instruction and differences in assessment, all of which require students to “change gear” as they move from school to college. The problem for students is that there is nobody to help them make this transition; there is no manual for coping with learning in college.

The same could be said for students moving from high school into any post-secondary institution.

**Giving an Education...**

What, then, can be done for the significant group of students who struggle with this important educational transition? While high school teachers can emphasize essential learning skills, the demands of an ambitious curriculum and, in some cases, board or school policies that undermine such efforts, are challenging. Yet it is essential that colleges and universities find ways to communicate and work with their high school colleagues – either through general educational discussion groups, participation in teaching conferences, or by offering specific professional development seminars. The importance of this cannot be overstated: although there seems to be little time to teach such skills in high school, there is even less time in college or university, where such skills are often assumed on entry.

In fact students also appear to believe they have the necessary skills, until they reach a crisis point during their first year. For example, 75% of students who felt that high school prepared them well nonetheless reported having to re-evaluate their study skills once in university (Stone, 2009). Furthermore, of four survey items related to learning and study skills – an emphasis on memorisation, use of a text book, homework completion, and time management – only the first has a (negative) impact on mean university grades and grade differentials. Indeed, 30% of students who report always completing their homework also admit to procrastinating! The increased pace, content, and reduced number of tests in university makes this an extremely risky practice. High school teachers can help by teaching – and evaluating – note taking and elaboration, problem solving strategies, and reading for comprehension within specific course contexts. College and university faculty can assist by providing suitable examples and problems from overlapping curriculum areas, particularly where students are known to have conceptual difficulties. Where grading concerns exist, a weighted scheme can be applied; students nonetheless benefit from gaining a clearer idea of what will be expected in college or university.

At the post-secondary level, it is clear that early identification of at-risk students through subject-specific pre-tests or general learning skills evaluations is imperative. This is particularly important for those high-enrolment first-year courses such as chemistry that act as “gatekeepers” for a wide range of degree programs. Such students can then be offered appropriate, effective skills programs either as stand-alone courses, supplemental units to existing courses, or components of “stretched” or preparatory courses in relevant subject areas. Alternatively, students can be streamed into tutorial and lab sections that provide greater support to at-risk students. A strong case can also be made for *Foundations for Learning* courses, ideally offered for general credit in the summer and fall sessions (Browning & Le-May Sheffield, 2008).

In the physical sciences, these at-risk students can well be described in Piagetian terms as lacking in formal operational development (Herron, 1975; Laurillard, 2005). This is manifest in the poor mathematical skills noted earlier, as well as difficulty with fundamental concepts and operations; for example, Herron (1975) lists 16 items in introductory college chemistry that challenge such students (p. 148). Referencing other educational frameworks, such students struggle with a surface approach to concepts that intrinsically require a deeper approach for mastery (Entwistle, 2010); and they struggle to move beyond factual knowledge and simple understanding to conceptual and procedural knowledge and higher levels of cognitive processing (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Students accustomed to success on such
basic terms may be unaware that higher dimensions of learning exist until they realise – too late – that they simply don’t “get it.” Frankly, they deserve better. In conclusion, a much greater emphasis needs to be placed on appropriate study skills and formal operational thinking to help these students make the transition from high school to college or university. Higher education should challenge students, but for the right – rather than avoidable – reasons. As one survey respondent wrote:

I feel my high school teachers prepared me very well for university, even though it was a big jump. Sometimes, change and challenge are nice and necessary for progress. Without challenge, we would all stay stagnant and there would be no scientific, political, social, or personal progress.

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**Biography**

David C. Stone is a senior lecturer in chemistry at the University of Toronto (St. George campus). He has been teaching chemistry for over 15 years, involved

with Canadian Chemistry Contest and the Canadian Chemistry Olympiad for the past five years, and regularly involved in other high school outreach activities. More information about the chemical education project and other research activities can be found at http://www.chem.utoronto.ca/~dstone/Research/
Some suggest there is a dilemma in post-secondary education between the tidal pulls of career- or disciplinary-oriented education and liberal education. A survey of University of Lethbridge alumni indicated that they found their liberal education important for developing skills that are valuable in life and work after graduation. Specific skills the Conference Board of Canada (2000) identified as important for employment success were indeed skills which alumni say they developed during their liberal education experience. I argue there is no dilemma at all and that liberal education does provide skills for employment success.

A climate characterized by global financial instability, budgetary belt-tightening, and stringent public accountability has certainly contributed to calls for reevaluating the value and purpose of post-secondary education and, especially, liberal education. On the one hand, some suggest that post-secondary education should aim to provide students with specialized knowledge and credentials necessary for employment. Margaret Wente (2009), a columnist for *The Globe and Mail*, expresses this view when she writes that, “a vast proportion of the student body neither wants nor needs a traditional liberal education anyway. They have no desire to sit at the feet of cloistered masters debating truth and beauty. They are essentially there for the credentials.” On the other hand, many argue that traditional liberal education, with its emphasis on learning from the classical thinkers of western civilization and discussing fundamental issues such as the nature of beauty and truth, continues to be the best way to prepare well-rounded individuals for living a good and fulfilling life.

My argument is that there is no dilemma. Liberal education does develop skills and abilities that are valuable in life and in the work place. Evidence gathered from graduates of an institution with an explicit liberal education philosophy, the University of Lethbridge, shows that they found their liberal education experience was important for developing skills necessary for success in the workplace.

Debate about the aims of education is not new. In 5th century BC, Athens educators were divided. Some felt education should develop the skills
of oratory and rhetoric, skills necessary for participation in Athenian democracy. Though a credential was not the outcome, the purpose was very pragmatic since the arguments and debates presented by “orators” contributed to the democratic decision making processes of the Athenian city state. Other Greek educators, however, felt that the purpose of education was to develop fundamental insights into wisdom and truth. For these thinkers, the pursuit of truth was a higher virtue that liberated the mind, releasing it from the “shadowy cave of ignorance” (Kimball, 1986).

Kimball (1986) suggests that these tides of emphasis have ebbed and flowed over the years. At times, the orators’ view has risen to dominance with its emphasis on the practical value of education. At other times, the philosophers’ tide has dominated and the oratorial stream has ebbed so that liberal education has emphasized the search for beauty, truth, and knowledge for the sake of knowledge rather than teaching for practical ends.

By the 18th century, the aim of post-secondary education in the United Kingdom was to develop the civilized and cultured man of good taste (Rothblatt, 1976). The British trajectory of liberal education was perhaps more influential for Canada than it was in the United States. In contrast to American universities’ more radical understanding of liberty, which emphasized the oratorial tradition, early Canadian universities emphasized what Kimball (1986) calls the philosophical tradition. Indeed, the founders of the University of New Brunswick (where the 2009 STLHE conference was held), recognizing that the new American nation would provide instruction only in revolutionary “‘Principles contrary to the British Constitution’ and that the cost of an overseas education would be prohibitive, urged the representatives of the British government to consider the ‘founding of a College…where Youth may receive a virtuous Education’ in such things as ‘Religion, Literature, Loyalty, & good Morals…’” (University of New Brunswick, n.d.).

Through the 19th and into the 20th centuries the approach to liberal education as a “general” education based primarily on reading the classics and learning received knowledge was eventually surpassed by rising professionalism. Professionalism brought with it disciplinary specialization, research, and the quest for progress and new knowledge of more practical application.

Are these two positions mutually exclusive? Does post-secondary education really face a dilemma between the tidal pulls of career- or disciplinary-oriented education and liberal education? The answer, in my mind, is no. This also seems to be the view of University of Lethbridge alumni.

Over the past few years, I have gathered anecdotal evidence from former students through letters and conversations which indicated that many alumni found their liberal education experience was not useless but, in fact, important for developing skills they found valuable in their lives and work after graduation. To better assess these views, my colleague, Dr. Jennifer Mather (Psychology), and I developed a questionnaire to explore perceptions of University of Lethbridge alumni about the value of their liberal education experience.

We prepared a survey of skills adapted from a pamphlet produced by the Conference Board of Canada titled Employability Skills 2000+. The survey questions (approved by the University of Lethbridge Human Research Ethics Committee) asked alumni to look back on their liberal education experience at the University and evaluate how important it was to their development of particular skills. The questions inquired about skills in three different areas: individual cognitive/intellectual skills (11 questions); self-reflection skills (8 questions); and individual management skills (5 questions). A link to the survey was sent in an email message to all alumni on the University’s Alumni Relations email list. The message reached 9157 alumni (32.5% of all University of Lethbridge alumni). We received 961 responses (10.5% of those emailed). We analyzed a total of 780 responses (8.5% of those emailed; 2.6% of all alumni). Duplicate, incomplete, and responses which did not differentiate on the response scale were deleted from the analysis.

Alumni indicated their responses on a seven point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). In the aggregate, 70% of all respondents rated the importance of their liberal
education experience in the upper three categories (response numbers 5, 6, and 7; see Figure 1). In total 19% rated the value of their liberal education as very important (response 7 on the Likert scale). Just 16% of respondents rated the importance of liberal education in the lower three categories.

Figure 2 compares the responses to the 24 questions which we adapted from the *Employability Skills 2000+* pamphlet. The bars represent an average of the total responses to each of the seven points on the Likert scale. Each bar thus provides only a handy indicator of the average weight of all choices made by alumni on each question. We can note that “written communication,” “personal attributes,” and “information retrieval” skills were areas where liberal education was seen to be most important while “numeracy,” “ability to work cross-culturally,” and “confidence in dealing with challenges” were areas where liberal education was reported to be least important. Overall, however, it is clear that the liberal education experience of alumni was viewed generally as being important for developing these skills when broken down by question.

Further distinctions emerged when we broke down the responses by major. Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education alumni rated their liberal education experience as being more important for developing these skills than did their peers with Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Management degrees (Figure 3).

We note that 11% of Bachelor of Education (BEd) and 14% of Bachelor of Arts (BA) alumni (represented by the two left-most bars in each group) rated the value of their liberal education experience on the not important side of the seven point Likert scale (response numbers 1, 2, and 3). In comparison, there
were more alumni with Bachelor of Science (BSc) and Bachelor of Management (BMgt) degrees (represented by the two right-most bars in each group) who rated their liberal education experience as not important (20% BMgt and 24% BSc alumni respectively with response numbers 1, 2, and 3). On the positive side, 22% of BEd and 20% of BA alumni rated the value of their liberal education experience as very important, while only 16% of BMgt and 15% of BSc alumni rated it as very important (response number 7).

This difference may be because the values of liberal education are more typically taught in BA and BEd courses than in BMgt and BSc courses. Additional study will be required to determine if this or other factors are at play.

When the results are broken down by year of graduation, we observe another pattern (Figure 2). Alumni who graduated more than 10 years ago (1999 and earlier, represented by the left-most bars in each group for year categories 1, 2, and 3) reported that their liberal education experience was more important than those graduating more recently (2000 through 2008 represented by the right-most bars in each group for year categories 4, 5, and 6). The average response of those graduating in the most recent four years was 4.87, while those who had graduated 10 years ago or earlier produced a mean of 5.10 and higher.

There may be a number of explanations for this pattern. It may be that after 10 years of life and work experience alumni appreciate the value of their liberal education more than they did when they first graduated. More recent graduates may not have yet come to value their experience as much as their older

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**Figure 2**

*Averages for Each Question*
Figure 3
Aggregated Responses by Major

Figure 4
Year of Graduation
colleagues. Another possibility is that student expectations or teaching methods may have changed over the past years to the point that students who graduated more than 10 years ago had a more favourable experience with liberal education during their years at the University than that had by more recent graduates. As well, it may be possible that after 10 years, a kind of academic amnesia has set in so that older graduates have developed a rosier picture of their liberal education experience than more recent graduates. Further research will provide a clearer picture.

Is there really a dilemma in post-secondary education between the tidal pulls of career- or disciplinary-oriented education and liberal education? I think the evidence from this survey shows that University of Lethbridge alumni have found no dilemma at all. They say that they have found their liberal education to be important for developing the very skills identified by the Conference Board of Canada (2000) as being important for employment success.

As for the tidal pulls within liberal education between Kimball’s (1986) two traditions of philosopher and orator, these data show that we need not be shy in arguing that liberal education does contribute to the development of useful skills. Especially in the current economic climate of tight budgets and clear accountability, it may be time to emphasize the orators’ tradition and to argue that liberal education does help to provide the skills necessary for success. The problems humanity faces in the future will not be solved by narrow-minded formulaic thinkers or by those who have no practical contribution to make. We need innovative creative thinkers who make connections across disciplinary boundaries and who have the skills to analyze arguments and think critically, to work with other people, and to synthesize data and make good arguments of their own. Liberal education develops these skills, skills that are valuable for employability and for citizenship. In my view, then, there is no dilemma.

References


Biography

D. Bruce MacKay (Ph.D., Religious Studies, University of Toronto; M.T.S., Biblical Studies, Harvard Divinity School; B.A., Anthropology, University of Lethbridge) has been Coordinator of Liberal Education at the University of Lethbridge since 2003. He is currently interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning and in the way that it applies to liberal education.
First-year university students are a diverse group of individuals with various abilities and needs. Failure of the university and its teaching faculty to meet the needs of first-year students may result in abandonment of the pursuit of a degree. This project informs instructors about the practices that strengthen a learning-centred approach and maximize inclusion of first-year students. The principles and teaching methods of Universal Instructional Design are learner-centred and have shown to improve academic achievement and benefit the campus community. Thus, it is suggested that the principles of this method be applied uniformly across university-level instruction.

Introduction

First-year university students begin their post-secondary education with various abilities and needs. Failure of the university and its teaching faculty to meet the needs of first-year students may result in abandonment of the pursuit of a degree. Improving the experiences of first-year students is crucial in retaining them to complete their degrees, and it is essential for faculty to become aware of how to address their needs. Having explored the literature on learning-centred teaching as well as the principles of teaching and Universal Instructional Design (UID), the authors propose a set of teaching strategies to help instructors of first-year students create an inclusive environment for students. These teaching strategies support the use of a learning-centred approach, the principles of teaching as well as UID in maximizing student success.

Learner-Centred Approach

Employing a learner-centred approach is an effective way of designing education so as to retain first-year students since it aims to support students by specifically targeting their needs. In contrast to traditional teaching methods where education is designed from the perspective of the instructor, a learner-centred approach aims chiefly to meet the student’s learn-
ing needs from the perspective of the students. Globally, colleges and universities are debating the value of implementing new student-centred learning perspectives, resulting in the increasing adoption of nontraditional methods and approaches by advanced learning institutions (Hubball, Gold, Mighty, & Britnell, 2007).

Suggesting that a teacher-centred environment makes students uninterested in learning, Weimer (2002) writes that a learner-centred teaching environment allows faculty to “give students some control over those learning processes that directly affect them.” Weimer explains that in learning-centred teaching, “teachers no longer function as exclusive content experts or authoritarian classroom managers” and that neither do they simply “work to improve teaching by developing sophisticated presentation skills” (p.14).

The learner-centred approach involves more than the pursuit of new techniques; it entails an integrated philosophy of education. Understanding the learning-centred approach to teaching requires an understanding of the role of power in the classroom. In a learning-centred environment, teachers do not one-sidedly make all the decisions about learning; rather they share these decisions with their students (Weimer, 2002). Weimer stresses that in UID, the instructor’s primary goal is to teach students learning skills through setting clear expectations and presenting unambiguous instructions, thus enabling the students to teach themselves.

A learner-centred classroom does not cater to student whims in a manner that reduces academic rigor. Instead, it provides clear learning expectations, helps students in understanding and utilizing knowledge (Galka & Gold, 2006), and fosters principles of accessibility and accommodation. Many universities support faculty in creating learner-centred classrooms through their teaching and learning centres and student disability services. Faculty also share first-year experiences with other faculty and collaborate on effectively producing and delivering first-year courses. However, faculty often face challenges in finding the time to attend teaching workshops or search websites for teaching tips on increasing accessibility and accommodation for first-year students. Also, the process of changing to a learner-centred approach must also involve assessing and analyzing one’s own teaching methods and creating a plan for implementing an individual gradual change process (Weimer, 2002). Without help, instructors may fail to produce a classroom conducive to meeting students’ needs for accessibility and for a successful transition into following years of study and on to graduation. Thus, focusing on the recent literature, the authors suggest a set of learner-centred teaching guidelines for faculty teaching first-year students.

Principles for Good Practice in Education

One important source of teaching guidelines is Chickering & Gamson’s Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (1987). Many dedicated professors have incorporated these widely recognized, evidence-based teaching practices into their teaching methods. These principles include: 1) encouraging contact between students and faculty; 2) encouraging active listening; 3) stressing time on task; 4) providing prompt feedback; 5) communicating high expectations; 6) developing reciprocity and cooperation among students; and 7) respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. Although these principles do provide a set of teaching guidelines for first-year professors, because of their specific nature, they are not applicable to all areas of instruction. For example, these principles provide little insight into how to set up the physical space of the classroom, how to write an effective syllabus, or how to provide effective instruction for a diverse audience of students. Further, this relatively limited scope of application does not help instructors address student needs in a wide variety of educational situations. Therefore, to succeed in the task, faculty require a set of teaching practices with a wider scope of applicability.

Principles of Universal Design

The idea of universal design originally developed
within the field of architecture. It aims to design products and environments that can be used by all people, to the greatest degree possible, and without the need for adaptation (Hebdon, 2007). For example, instead of creating a building to be used by the majority, as is the traditional practice, the principles of universal design suggest that buildings be designed to accommodate the greatest number and variety of individuals possible. Thus, architects using this method have aimed for flexible use by as many individuals as possible, regardless of handedness or motor dexterity, while rejecting the idea of simply making products for most users. The universal design perspective views people as individuals with varying abilities and preferences instead of seeing them as a homogeneous group.

Frank Bowe developed guidelines for applying the principles of universal design to teaching, highlighting “a few key instructional strategies” (Burgstahler, 2008). Applying the universal design perspective to education, termed Universal Design in Education, seeks to create educational processes, learning environments, and teaching strategies that are applicable to the greatest diversity of people possible (Samuels, 2007). This approach aims to develop an educational strategy that is suitable for as many people as possible, rather than an educational strategy designed for one learner. Sometimes, when applying these principles to college- and university-level education, the term Universal Design in Higher Education (UDHE) is used.

There are several dimensions to UDHE including physical spaces, information technology, services, and instruction – all of which allow for opportunities to adopt inclusive choices. Applying this perspective to teaching practices is one of the dimensions within Universal Design in Education. UID, also referred to as Universal Design for Instruction (UDI), involves universal design as it is applied to instructional products and environments (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008). This provides a set of principles for developing courses and teaching. The principles of UID recommend that instructors: 1) plan for equitable use; 2) plan for flexibility in use; 3) plan for simple and intuitive use; 4) plan for perceptible information; 5) plan for a tolerance for error built in; 6) plan for low physical effort; 7) plan to consider size and space for appropriate use; 8) plan to create a community of learners; and 9) plan to create an inclusive climate (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008). Instructors who employ these principles in course design and delivery consider the potential needs of all learners, identifying and removing unnecessary barriers to teaching and learning, while preserving academic rigor (Burgstahler, & Cory, 2008; Coomber, 2007). Not only is this learner-centred, but it is easy to carry out and applicable to the greatest number of learners possible.

Benefits of UID Teaching Strategies

The principles of UID (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008) build on learner-centred perspectives and the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987), and provide faculty with guidelines that are applicable to all areas of education. When put into practice, these methods also produce benefits for academic success and for the school environment. Academically, implementing UID strategies improve the ability of students to concentrate, hold information, memorize information, understand, note-take, and achieve academic success (Mino, 2004; Yuval & Korabik, 2003). When carrying out UID principles, these improvements occur without reducing academic rigor (Burgstahler, & Cory, 2008). Therefore, student improvements are the outcome of greater teaching effectiveness resulting from these strategies and cannot be accounted for by reduced standards.

UID also produces many non-academic benefits that may help with retaining first-year students. UID practices affirm student diversity and promote a sense of community among students (Mino, 2004). This may aid universities in attracting and preserving a diverse cultural or ethnic student body (Embery, Parker, McGuire, & Scott, 2005). Additionally, UID practices build inclusive practices into the educational process, normalizing student diversity and decreasing the need for specialized accommodations (Embery et al., 2005; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2002).
Challenges to Implementing Effective UID Teaching Strategies

Despite the benefits outlined in the literature, UID is not uniformly adopted as the teaching standard by institutions of higher learning. The literature identified several barriers to carrying out these strategies. First, adopting a new teaching model needs leadership and administrative support (Embry et al., 2005). Without this support, it is difficult for faculty to receive training on UID, gain access to suitable facilities and technologies, or to redesign course curriculum. At times, universities may view UID strategies as being feasibly difficult to carry out because of recommendations that stress the need to incorporate technology into each classroom (Embry et al., 2005).

Second, individual faculty members often resist using UID. Faculty members hesitate to adopt a new approach when they lack training, experience, and expertise in UID (Embry et al., 2005). Where faculty fail to recognize the diversity that exists within university classrooms, they may not consider it necessary to adjust their approach (Embry et al., 2005). Finally, some faculty express concern that employing UID teaching practices will result in reduced control of the classroom environment for the instructor (Blizzard & Foster, 2007).

Third, negative attitudes about accommodating various learners in higher education may act as a barrier to using UID. Adopting the UID perspective requires that one accept the position that accessibility issues exist within traditional teaching pedagogy, and that these affect learning of all students (Coomber, 2007). Coomber suggests that although faculty value UID practices, developing academic access for a diverse variety of students remains a challenge. Further, the UID teaching model is often inappropriately thought of as a method that focuses on individuals with disabilities rather than the entire student population (Finkel & Gold, 1999). These attitudes towards diversity, accessibility, and disability have resulted in stalled efforts to using UID in the regular curriculum.

UID Teaching Guidelines

The nine principles of UID, many of which are familiar to effective teachers, provide an opportunity to develop teaching guidelines. When instructors apply UID to typical instructional areas, they create teaching guidelines. Faculty apply teaching guidelines, as summarized in the following areas (Carter, Leslie, & Moore, 2009; Scott & McGuire, 2008; Stolarchuk, Carter, & Leslie, 2009):

Classroom set-up

- When teaching, present material that is visible to all students, whether seated or standing, and face students when speaking to them.
- Speak clearly, suitably pacing comments, and using variations in tone to highlight the information during discussion.
- Expand the classroom, where possible, to make use of online classrooms through chat rooms, real time multimedia, and online access to labs.

Information delivery

- Use varied and simultaneous instructional strategies. Methods may include: student presentations, course readings, guest lecturers, active learning techniques, small group projects, activity sheets, take home or online exercises, videos, and group discussions.
- Ensure that course material is suitable for the course level.
- Make textbooks available in both print and digital format.
- Use jargon-free language and explain technical terminology.
- Give students regular breaks during class.

Student evaluation

- Use various assessment strategies and allow for choice of assignment format, whenever possible.
• Use scaffolding techniques with practice exercises and constructive feedback.
• Employ a grading rubric or study guides, samples of expected work, and sample exams, and create a comprehensive syllabus with clear expectations.

Faculty-student communication
• Develop a course syllabus that clearly outlines the goals and expectations of the course.
• Provide regular and prompt feedback to students. Allow students to provide regular and anonymous feedback to you.
• Hold regular office hours and set clear email guidelines so students can discuss questions and concerns individually.

Creating a community of learners
• Create opportunities for students to interact with each other during class time.
• Encourage study groups, online discussion boards, chat rooms, in-class group discussions, and group assignments.
• Acquire available technology, equipment, and services to improve educational opportunities.

Creating an inclusive environment
• Allow students to develop their class code of conduct as a group.
• Develop a class syllabus that contains inclusive and respectful wording.
• Ensure rubrics reflect a respectful, inclusive approach.

Many of these strategies are familiar to high-quality instructors, and many committed instructors have discovered these effective teaching strategies as part of their personal journeys in becoming effective educators. The following section discusses recognizing, as well as developing, good teaching strategies as tools towards effective teaching.

Discussion

The learner-centred perspective, the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education (Chickering & Gamson, 1987), and UID principles reflect similar approaches as they aim to aid faculty in providing effective academic instruction for first-year students. However, UID is the most useful in providing faculty effective teaching methods. The learning-centred approach lacks specific guidelines and principles, and Chickering and Gamson’s Seven Principles lack guidelines that could be applicable in all instructional settings. The UID approach builds on the other two approaches by developing instructions to meet the needs of students rather than instructors. It also provides a set of principles that are broad enough to allow for the practical application of its methods to all areas of instruction.

Many instructors have informally discovered UID teaching strategies and find that they are effective in the classroom. Research on UID confirms their observations and formally recognizes these important practices (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008). Faculty who practice effective teaching strategies should be encouraged to study UID principles and discover added ways to incorporate UID teaching strategies into their teaching.

Although certain faculty already use UID strategies, it is important to expose all instructors to these strategies and to encourage UID strategies to be applied uniformly within classrooms across all instructional areas. It is unlikely the sporadic application of UID principles within any particular university will result in increased first-year student retention. However, by applying these principles as the norm of instruction across the university, students as a whole are likely to achieve better academic results. They will also feel more positive about the university community, which in turn should lead to a greater retention of first-year students. Achieving the successful implementation of UID-based teaching strategies requires that faculty rethink perspectives on what it means to provide accessible education. Therefore, university administrations should aim to support implementing UID at their institutions by
providing the facilities with technology and faculty training needed for the successful implementation of UID and its empirical support.

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Biographies

Irene Carter, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in School of Social Work, and Program Coordinator, Disability Studies, at the University of Windsor. Her main areas of interest are social support for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, disability studies, and self-help groups.

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Experiences of New Faculty in a Transitional Institution

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Mount Royal University

This research project studies the induction and socialization of new faculty at Mount Royal University, recently transitioned from college to undergraduate university status. There is extensive documentation in the literature on issues faced by new faculty in post-secondary institutions; however, very little is published on how a culture in flux may complicate this socialization. This project uses interpretive inquiry to study the experience over three successive years of new faculty experience. We use themes found in the prior literature of stress, time, socialization, and evaluation to structure our initial findings, but propose that a more complex framework is required to understand new faculty experience under these conditions of institutional transformation.

Introduction

Our institution is undergoing a large scale transition from college to university. Mount Royal College, now University, has traditionally been an institution placing a high value on quality of instruction and the student experience. The institution continues to promote these values, along with an increased emphasis on faculty scholarship.

The transition has been accompanied by the hiring of large numbers of full-time faculty to support the expanded degree programs. More than a third of the full-time faculty at Mount Royal University (MRU) have been hired in the last three years. This phenomenon has had a significant impact on the institution, and its processes of induction and socialization.

This research project emerged as a small group of new faculty hired in 2007 to work together to understand their own experiences of induction and socialization in the midst of this institutional transition. There is extensive documentation in the literature on issues faced by new faculty in post-secondary institutions; however, very little is published on how a culture in flux may complicate this socialization. Our research question, therefore, is: “What is the lived experience of new faculty in a transitional institution?” Using interpretive inquiry, this project studies the experiences of full-time faculty, beginning with the experiences of the research group in 2007 (Phase I), and continuing with participants hired in 2008 (Phase II), and 2009 (Phase III). This paper
reflects the preliminary findings from Phase I. Data analysis is still underway for Phases II and III.

**Literature in Brief**

Trowler and Knight (2000) argue that induction into faculty life is a complex socialization process with many unwritten rules. However, the work that has been done in the area of new faculty induction usually assumes a stable institution. Perry, Menec, and Struthers (1999) suggest that perceived control over work environments relates directly to a new faculty member’s success in achieving tenure and in long term retention. In their study, "dual mission" institutions, where teaching and research are blended, resulted in a more difficult adjustment to the institution by new faculty (p. 205). MRU is in the midst of changing from a single mission (a focus on teaching) to a dual mission institution (teaching and scholarship). A search of the literature found little work has been done on the effect such a transition has on new faculty induction and adjustment. What little has been published references changing expectations for teaching and scholarship for faculty, but focuses on issues of legislation and governance (Dennison, 2006).

In a large scale North American study, Menges (1999) identified four key areas of concern to new faculty: stress, time, socialization, and evaluation. In the present study we began by using these themes to organize our thinking around transition. So far, while many issues faced by new faculty in general are shared by MRU newcomers, these concerns seem to be exacerbated by the transition. In our early stages of data analysis it is becoming evident that Menges’ (1999) framework is inadequate to describe the complexity encountered by new faculty at MRU today. We hope to gain a clearer understanding of the nature of these potential differences through this study.

**Approach to the Inquiry**

Phase I of the project began in 2007 with the research group’s self-study of their lived experiences. Because the project began as a group exploration, the investigators’ perspectives were grounded within the research question and the narratives that were produced. In Phase II, nine participants drawn from the 2008 new hires were interviewed in the fall and spring using semi-structured interviews based on the themes generated during Phase I. These participants will be interviewed once more in 2009-10, while another group of participants from 2009 new hires will be interviewed in the fall and spring. Interpretive inquiry is a good fit for this research as it ensures a focus on the lived experiences of the participants. This approach requires researchers to situate themselves openly in relation to the research question and to become intentional in their consciousness of questioning, being the object and researcher simultaneously (Gadamer, 1999). Intentional lived experience takes time to assimilate, and our memory and construction of it over time shapes our reality in potentially profound ways (Gadamer, 1999). Extending the horizon of the lived experience of the original investigators in Phase I will help to deepen our understanding, and more richly present our common experiences (Gadamer, 1999) as new faculty in a transitional institution.

**Time and Stress**

“Time always seems to be the most limited resource. I seem to get most things done just in time.”

Most new faculty members referred to time as a major source of concern. Competing demands, difficulty finding balance, and time management were issues identified by the participants. The constant nature of these demands is exacerbated by further work related to the transition occurring at MRU.

“I didn’t actually predict how much time the ‘in between’ stuff would take – or how important it seems to the faculty. There seems to be more of the ‘in between’ work than anyone can actually do.”

Time demands include traditional desires and responsibilities for new faculty such as teaching well while
dealing with heavy course loads. The “in-between” responsibilities such as attendance at orientations and department meetings as well as committee work and connecting with one’s team often resulted in feelings of being rushed. The institutional transition requires course development, increased paperwork accounting for scholarship activities, and committee work related to transitional processes. For some, additional expectations include finding time for Ph.D. work or other research. Ph.D. research was described as a pressure rather than an option by some participants.

“I’m running from appointment to appointment and not being terribly effective at anything once I get there.”

Many new faculty members expressed the desire for a balance between their personal and professional lives. One participant identified the need to find balance before it affected their job performance. Powerful descriptions of having to let go of family traditions and routines were shared. Some described taking on too much as they felt it was important to consider how things appeared to colleagues.

Time and stress are closely connected issues. Stress was often related to the significant time pressures experienced by new faculty, but it is also related to adapting to a new (but unstable) culture, being asked to take on additional responsibilities (such as course co-ordination), and for some, teaching for the first time. One faculty member, when asked about how the transition was affecting her, explained that the time and stress pressures made those issues secondary:

“I found that I was aware of the transition issues/dynamic in the college, but I was so focused on survival (teaching and leading courses, research, staying awake, learning about the culture, attending meetings) that those issues became secondary.”

Time and stress demands do not appear to diminish for new faculty in their second year. Although there was also a better understanding of the amount of time required in their new roles, it was expressed that expectations and demands simply grew for those seasoned by a year of work.

Socialization and Evaluation

Through formal affiliations such as committees and, perhaps more importantly, through informal relationships, new faculty have developed a sense of the power structure in the faculties and departments at MRU. As stated by one faculty member:

“I am becoming more attuned to interacting both formally and informally with my faculty colleagues. I have developed a few ‘closer’ relationships with coworkers, and this provides me with an invaluable source of information regarding who’s who, and what’s really going on.”

While the informal relationships have created a “survival lifeline” for new faculty at MRU, their formation has been inhibited by the constant and sometimes chaotic reshuffling of office space required by growing programs. As opposed to the more competitive relationships that often exist between junior faculty at larger research institutions, new faculty at MRU appear to have the strongest associations with other junior faculty.

“My closest ties are to those who are also relatively new to the organization… I have found that there are personal and professional tensions between faculty members, and being a novice at navigating them I have found myself in a few uncomfortable spots throughout the year.”

The evaluation process for tenure is, like the institution, in flux. Tenure candidates being evaluated and experienced tenured faculty doing the evaluating are both left to manage this uncertainty around expectations while guidelines are being developed. Many of the new faculty found the entire experience of evaluation quite daunting:

“It was nerve wracking to have an internal
and an external peer observe my teaching…”

“I found the tenure binder process surprisingly time consuming.”

“I’m not sure how much service makes good service for tenure purposes.”

With this lack of clarity, the way scholarship will be evaluated stands out as one of the most major concerns of the new faculty at MRU.

An Institution in Transition

Particular tensions emerged in the data that can be linked specifically to the College’s transformation. One participant wrote:

“The transition to undergraduate institution means the culture is in a state of major disruption. This exacerbates the typical pattern of tension always found between ‘old’ and ‘new’ one normally expects.”

Several of the study participants reported feeling linked in the minds of their more established colleagues with the changes occurring at the institution, especially the increased emphasis on scholarship. As one participant put it:

“There is a certain sense of fear or threat, in some cases, that the new people represent.”

The institutional transition has exacerbated what are perhaps inevitable tensions between new and established faculty. The institutional transition has had some positive outcomes for newly hired faculty as well. The cultural disruption has opened doors for new faculty. One participant stated:

“If I were at a traditional university, I would never have so quickly been afforded the kinds of opportunities that I have here…”

The institutional shift has been accompanied by the proliferation of new committees and expanded workloads for existing bodies. There are simply not enough tenured bodies to handle the increased service workload. As a result, many of the participants of the study have had the opportunity to participate in administrative work and institutional-level committees at an earlier stage of their career at MRU than they may have expected elsewhere. The increased service expectations, however, can add significantly to the workload and stress levels of new faculty as they attempt to navigate these committees without a lot of experience.

The data from Phase I, while congruent with previous work on new faculty, hints at emerging transitional issues. In our current work in Phases II and III, these issues take centre stage. We attribute this to the specific changes occurring at the institution during each year, for example, the introduction of separate research- and teaching-focused work patterns, the introduction of rank, and changes in the tenure system.

Developing Conclusions

Initial analysis of data from Phase II of this study further emphasizes the need for a more complex, dynamic theoretical framework. While stress, time, evaluation, and socialization continue to play a role in the experiences of faculty who joined MRU in the fall of 2008, many of the power dynamics identified by the original participants appear to have intensified. Through our analysis, we are beginning to conceptualize the experiences of new faculty as a series of competing discourses that create multi-faceted tensions in day-to-day work. While the tensions may not represent polar opposites, they are often experienced as forces that present dilemmas and compete for the time, energy, and attention of new faculty. This indeed represents a particular sense of being “between the tides” in our institution, as the 2009 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education conference theme reflected more broadly.

New faculty members are both shaping and being shaped by the emerging institutional culture.
Within this dynamic, the competing discourses of teaching versus scholarship are strong. A tension between the existing and emerging culture is evident throughout the data. Another strong dynamic involves the navigation of change without a roadmap. The competing discourses of what is known and unknown, and spoken and unspoken figure prominently. For example, some faculty expect to be evaluated on their scholarly activities, but it is uncertain how exactly scholarship will be defined and what will count. Rumour and hearsay play a significant role in the absence of concrete information.

Finally, also shifting is the pattern of relationships. For many of the new faculty in this study, their closest relationships are with other new faculty. The typical mentorship pattern is thus affected by the changes in the institution and by large numbers of new hires. In addition to more fully conceptualizing and exploring the tensions, dynamics, and competing discourses mentioned above, the precise nature of the mentorship pattern experienced under these particular circumstances will likely form a key focus of our continuing investigation.

References


Biographies

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Health care researchers and practitioners are increasingly asked to work across disciplines (or, in keeping with the conference theme, “Between the Tides”) to deal with complex health issues. But working with individuals from different fields is more challenging than it sounds. Working across disciplines can result in tension and miscommunications. Furthermore, to explore interactions among disciplines requires breaking down disciplinary boundaries and creating a common framework and language to define, analyze, and develop new approaches.

This paper explores the benefits and challenges of teaching transdisciplinarity in a discipline-centred world, including a description of the journey of one post-graduate research training program as it strives to help student researchers break down disciplinary borders and develop a common framework to approach a particular health issue – in this case, the problem of substance misuse and addictions.

Introduction

With the recognition that health issues are complex and are affected by social, cultural, political, physical, psychological, and economic factors (Rosenfield, 1992) comes the realization that single disciplines cannot adequately describe a given health problem, nor devise its solution.
Thus, in order to fully understand any health problem, research from varied disciplines, including basic biomedical research, clinical research, epidemiology, sociology, psychology, and others, is needed. Moreover, the knowledge from each of these disciplines must be synthesized and integrated, as the manifestation of what each of these disciplines studies in people's actual lives does not occur in isolation. For example, social problems occur alongside, and interact with, physical and health problems in the individual's life, so keeping sociology separate from the biomedical sciences misses the bigger picture. This speaks to the need for collaboration among researchers from different disciplines. Yet universities are typically structured in discipline-separate “silos” which “foster competitiveness and individualism…more than cooperation and consensus-building” (Poole, Egan, & Iqbal, 2009, p. 148-9). As Austin, Park, and Goble (2008) noted: “In contemporary academia, there is a tension between disciplinary specialization and the need to acknowledge the complex reality of the 21st century” (p. 557). Fortunately, there is increasing interest in the value of cross-disciplinary collaborative research in the health sciences (Fuqua, Stokols, Gress, Phillips, & Harvey, 2004; Kessel & Rosenfield, 2008; Scott & Hofmeyer, 2007). But collaborative research is complicated (Younglove-Webb, Gray, Abdulla, & Thurow, 1999), requiring skills beyond those typically gained in disciplinary training. This paper discusses how one postgraduate research training program worked “between the tides” in its journey towards transdisciplinarity.

What is Transdisciplinarity?

While there is some disagreement in the literature on the language used for the different types of collaborative research, many scholars refer to Rosenfield's (1992) definitions, which describe taxonomy of cross-disciplinary research as:

- **multidisciplinary research**: researchers address a common problem independently, either concurrently or sequentially, in their own disciplines, in isolation from other disciplines; results are brought together only at the end.

- **interdisciplinary research**: researchers work together to address a common problem, but each researcher works from their own discipline's base, using their own discipline's techniques.

- **transdisciplinary research**: researchers work together to consciously transcend their discipline's conceptual, theoretical and methodological orientation to develop a “shared approach” to research and build a common framework that is used to define, analyze and develop new approaches to the problem (Kessel & Rosenfield, 2008).

Transdisciplinarity involves “blurring boundaries” between disciplines and the synthesis of a new epistemology – new conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and new methodological approaches that ultimately yield a deeper understanding of the problem being studied “as a complex dynamic system” (Kessel & Rosenfield, 2008, p. S228). Mitrany and Stokols (2005) identify characteristics of transdisciplinary researchers, including inclusive thinking, broad-gauged, contextually oriented in their theorizing, methodologically eclectic, open-minded, respectful of divergent viewpoints, and adept at promoting good will and cross-disciplinary tolerance.

The “products” of transdisciplinary research extend beyond the products of traditional disciplinary research (e.g., academic publications and presentations in discipline-specific journals and at discipline-specific conferences) and include new, innovative hypotheses; integrative theoretical frameworks for analyzing problems; novel methodological approaches to analyzing those problems; and, ultimately, evidence-based recommendations for policy and practice (Stokols et al., 2003). This is not to say that unidisciplinary research cannot generate such things as new hypotheses or evidence-based recommendations, but rather that transdisciplinary research yields hypotheses, frameworks, method-
ological approaches, and evidence-based recommendations that are beyond those which can have been achieved by unidisciplinarity, or even multi or interdisciplinarity.

**History and Evolution of Our Program**

There is increasing recognition that fully understanding and addressing complex health problems requires collaboration across disciplines. In response, in 2002 the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) launched a Strategic Training Initiative in Health Research (STIHR) to create training programs that equip students to develop both specific content knowledge and transferable skills in working across disciplines to define, analyze, and develop new approaches for solving complex health problems. The Intersections of Mental Health Perspectives in Addictions Research Training (IMPART) program was funded as one of 84 such programs across Canada. IMPART focuses on the issues of gender and addictions and received a renewal of funding from STIHR in April 2009 with an expanded mandate to explore the intersections of violence, trauma, and mental health with addictions and gender. IMPART is made up of:

- **mentors**: faculty members from the Universities of British Columbia (UBC), Victoria, and Toronto, representing a diverse array of disciplines (e.g., nursing, sociology, epidemiology, neuroscience, counselling psychology);
- **trainees**: graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, or clinician- or community-based researchers conducting research on gender and addictions; they can come from any disciplinary background; and a
- **program coordinator**: an individual responsible for program development and who works to facilitate the transdisciplinary projects of trainees and mentors

The goal of IMPART is to enhance the capacity of researchers in applying a sexed and gendered approach to the study of addictions and its intersections with mental health, trauma, and violence. IMPART works to produce addictions researchers conversant with transdisciplinarity and having the necessary skills to work with colleagues from a variety of disciplines.

Over the six years of its existence, IMPART has created a curriculum that is trainee-centred and fosters a supportive, transdisciplinary research community. An evolution of IMPART has been informed by the literature on transdisciplinary research and training as well as feedback from trainees and mentors. Initially, seminars consisted of mentors lecturing on addictions and gender. Trainee feedback indicated that more active and interactive learning was desired and required to allow for true transdisciplinarity. Seminars are now led by trainees, although mentors do co-present with trainees on occasion. Time devoted to formal presentations decreased, allowing time for discussions to interrogate one’s own and each other’s understandings, assumptions, and approaches – a necessary process for transdisciplinarity.

Access to IMPART has increased through the use of online forums and videoconferencing, resulting in the program’s geographical expansion. Originally, all trainees and mentors attended seminars in Vancouver. Through the use of videoconferencing, trainees have now attended seminars from Victoria, BC; Kelowna, BC; Toronto, ON; Hawaii, USA; and London, UK. Currently, IMPART consists of:

- **individualized learning plans** directly linking each trainee’s needs to IMPART objectives;
- **a research project** in the area of gender, addictions, mental health, violence, and trauma;
- **an online course** covering the core concepts in gender and addictions, and their intersections with mental health, violence, and trauma from a variety of disciplines, allowing trainees to learn about the knowledge, perspectives, methodological approaches, and values of other disciplines;

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1 Formerly the Integrated Mentor Program in Addictions Research Training program.
• **monthly seminars** which expand beyond the online course and provide opportunities to build community and share knowledge and ideas;

• **professional development workshops** (e.g., presentation skills, media training);

• annual **Research Day** with trainees, mentors, and community stakeholders sharing ideas and knowledge and building community; and

• **trainee-driven, transdisciplinary collaborative projects** (e.g., grant proposals, manuscript preparation, knowledge translation).

**Transdisciplinary Features of Our Program**

IMPART provides trainees and mentors with the tools to transcend their own discipline and work toward the development of transdisciplinary frameworks for addressing their research. Recognizing that each discipline brings its own philosophical worldview, language, traditions, and research approaches, the IMPART online course was developed to provide background on the issues of addictions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, setting the stage for transdisciplinary work. The course consists of a series of work-at-your-own pace modules, allowing trainees to focus on the areas with which they are least familiar in order to “fill in the gaps” in their own background knowledge. This exposure to the perspectives and knowledge of their fellow trainees provides a more level playing field on which to start their conversations and collaborations. Additionally, reviewing the modules on one’s own discipline provides trainees with an opportunity to reflect on assumptions and perspectives which their own field brings to the table, a process that often does not occur during unidisciplinary training.

Seminars, co-led by multidisciplinary teams of trainees and mentors, with topics being determined by the group at the start of each year, allow trainees and mentors to compare, contrast and synthesize knowledge, understanding and assumptions of each discipline. “Transdisciplinary moments,” explicitly noted during seminars, serve to draw attention to the process and content of transdisciplinary thinking. Similarly, Research Day involves group discussions and participation from community stakeholders, which facilitates community-building and development of common frameworks and understanding.

Collaborative projects provide trainees the opportunity to work with colleagues from other disciplines to build transdisciplinary understanding. Examples of transdisciplinary projects undertaken by trainees include running a CIHR-funded Café Scientifique event engaging members of the general public in discussions on the issues of addictions, and conducting a transdisciplinary literature review on the intersections of violence, trauma, and mental health with addictions and gender from each of the four pillars of health research (biomedical, clinical, population health, and health services). The latter formed the basis of the literature review for the grant application that secured continued funding for IMPART.

**Challenges**

IMPART has experienced some of the challenges facing those who seek to undertake transdisciplinary research (e.g., Choi & Pak, 2007; Heitkemper et al., 2008; Kessel & Rosenfield, 2008; Scott & Hofmeyer, 2007; Younglove-Webb et al., 1999).

Different worldviews and values, methodological approaches, and even language (including discipline-specific jargon) can complicate communications and understanding in transdisciplinary teams. While working on a transdisciplinary literature review on the intersections of violence, trauma, and mental health with addictions and gender, even something as seemingly simple as finding appropriate keywords for searching the literature was hampered by language differences among the different fields. For example, the word “trauma” when used by the sociologists yielded publications about the concept of interest (e.g., experiences causing severe mental and/or physical pain, such as childhood physical and sexual abuses, war, post-traumatic stress disorder), but using trauma in the biomedical literature yielded papers related to blunt force...
injury. This was a clear transdisciplinary moment for the group, requiring us to stop and reflect on process and language. While highly useful, occurrences such as these do make transdisciplinary work more time-consuming, something often identified as a challenge of collaborative research.

Institutional policies can also pose a challenge; for example, the sharing of research credit, which accompanies collaborative research, is not a universal academic practice. The time-consuming nature of collaborative work can affect publication, promotion, tenure, and grant funding. Determining the order of authorship can be problematic and different disciplines place different value on multi-authored papers (as opposed to single-author papers).

Due to the relative newness of transdisciplinarity, there is, as yet, no agreement on the best way to assess the success of a transdisciplinary research agenda or training program (Stokols et al., 2003). Fortunately, the increasing interest in transdisciplinarity in health research has led to an emergent literature exploring possible ways of assessing the transdisciplinarity, including assessing the transdisciplinarity of a research product (Mitrany & Stokols, 2005), research agendas (Fuqua et al., 2004) and researcher competencies (Gebbie et al., 2008).

Some short-term assessments used by IMPART to monitor program success include: (a) tracking trainee conference presentations and publications, focusing on those co-authored by IMPART trainees and mentors; and (b) obtaining trainee reflections on the value of transdisciplinarity to their thinking and research. Plans to evaluate medium- and long-term outcomes (e.g., the development of a transdisciplinary research agenda or academic appointment of a program graduate to a multidisciplinary research centre) include assessment of the transdisciplinarity of products (e.g., articles, theses/dissertations), and the use of surveys and case studies of program graduates in the years following completion of IMPART.

Factors that Facilitate Successful Transdisciplinary Research

Securing funding through the CIHR STIHR has allowed IMPART to provide training that creates an environment conducive to successful transdisciplinarity (Choi & Pak, 2007; Heitkemper et al., 2008; Kessel & Rosenfield, 2008; Spruijt-Metz & Chou, 2004; Younglove-Webb et al., 1999). This includes the development of a mutually respectful community of learners from a variety of disciplines, with trainees and mentors continually exposed to other disciplines and their research approaches, agendas, methods, and values. Also, trainees and mentors are focused on a common problem – that of addictions – and work to develop a shared understanding of the problem. Furthermore, by explicitly interrogating the notion of transdisciplinarity, including examining personal assumptions and language, IMPART members have been able to develop a shared language to facilitate their ability to work across disciplines.

Specific to transdisciplinary training, Nash (2008) supported a focus on a well-defined research problem, the use of an individualized training plan, a team mentoring structure, and “meta training” about the transdisciplinary research process. IMPART includes all of these features. All members of IMPART have a research focus on gender and addictions and each individual research project has a specific focus within this area. Each trainee develops an individualized learning plan to map his/her specific training process and ensure program objectives are met. While each trainee does have one primary mentor, he/she also has access to the entire cadre of mentors through mentor attendance at IMPART seminars and Research Day and through the mentors’ availability to meet with trainees on an “as needed” basis. “Meta training” in the form of presentations and discussion at Research Day serves to help trainees “to understand the conceptual distinction of transdisciplinary training, manage the obstacles and capitalize on the facilitators” (Nash, 2008, S139) of transdisciplinarity.

Several authors (Hall, Feng, Moser, Stokols, & Taylor, 2008; Kessel & Rosenfield, 2008; Nash, 2008) advocated for transdisciplinarity training early in an individual’s research career, which allows graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to learn “to respect the value and values of others and worry less about submerging their professional identities in the
team process” (Kessel & Rosenfield, 2008, p. S231) before becoming too deeply embedded in the rigidity of their home discipline. Nash (2008) noted that transdisciplinary training early in one’s career could lead to insufficient grounding in discipline-specific skills, although this is not the case with IMPART as it is provided in addition to, not in place of, the trainee’s disciplinary training. It is also noted that training in transdisciplinarity for senior investigators should occur, as these individuals both mentor trainees early in their careers and hold responsibility for the management of large research institutes (Hall et al., 2008). In addition to training for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, IMPART has also exposed senior (and junior) investigators, as mentors, to transdisciplinary work.

Past and present IMPART trainees consistently note the value that IMPART adds to their research training beyond that in their home disciplines. “Interaction with experts working within the same field but on a very different level informs the theoretical basis for my neurobiological experiments with rats,” notes a PhD trainee. “What I find most useful about my involvement with IMPART is the opportunity to connect with peers and mentors from many disciplines to truly connect clinical work with academic work. At IMPART, we get to debate theories and new research and to really be critical about our work and its relevance to improving the health of women with addictions issues,” commented a Masters trainee, while another said, “IMPART plays an essential role in my development into a more skilful clinician-scientist and is preparing me well for my eventual work in the diverse field of women’s health care and research.”

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**Biographies**

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Richard Young, Ph.D., is one of the IMPART mentors. He is a Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. A Fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association, Professor Young interests are in the areas of parent-adolescent interaction, health psychology, and career development.
L’Étudiant de Niveaux Débutant et Intermédiaire en Phonétique Corrective Face aux Outils d’Auto-Apprentissage

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Les progrès technologiques des dernières années dans le domaine du multimédia proposent différentes ressources à l’enseignement de la phonétique et encouragent ainsi l’auto-apprentissage de la prononciation dans un environnement virtuel. L’étudiant peut choisir entre cédéroms, DVD, sites Internet et laboratoires virtuels pour se former dans un environnement convivial et autonome. Toutefois, le principe d’auto-apprentissage appliqué à la phonétique corrective aux niveaux débutant et intermédiaire est inévitablement entravé par la spécificité de la matière enseignée. En effet, l’apprentissage de la langue orale est fondé dans une grande mesure sur l’interaction entre la perception de la parole et sa production (Renard, 1979). Ainsi, un apprenant produira les sons tels qu’il les entend, et souvent ceux-ci sont profondément influencés par sa langue native. L’enseignement de la phonétique corrective, mené majoritairement dans un environnement virtuel et autonome, ne risque-t-il pas de donner une légitimité à l’erreur et à l’approximation plutôt qu’à la prononciation correcte?

Introduction

Dans notre cours de phonétique corrective, l’objectif minimal est l’atteinte d’une intelligibilité confortable permettant à l’apprenant de comprendre et de se faire comprendre dans des situations impliquant l’usage oral de la langue cible. Devant cet objectif pédagogique, et dans le paysage éducatif actuel qui 1) utilise de façon poussée les technologies de l’information et de la communication pour l’enseignement (TICE) et 2) qui encourage l’auto-apprentissage, nous avons adopté la plate-forme interactive CAN-8. Ce laboratoire virtuel fait partie des programmes de type tutor (Lévy, 1997) où l’étudiant n’a qu’à suivre l’ordre proposé par l’enseignant-concepteur. Le logiciel est doté d’un système de rétroaction auditive et visuelle qui permet à l’apprenant, détaché du rapport à l’enseignant, de comparer sa prononcia-
tion à celle du modèle, de se coriger au besoin, de faire les activités une ou plusieurs fois et de suivre ainsi un cheminement personnalisé. Ces avantages fournis par le numérique entraînent une attitude positive face à l’apprentissage de la prononciation, stimulent l’autonomie, l’individualisation et la motivation. Par conséquent, le multimédia rendrait l’entraînement phonétique plus stimulant et l’acquisition du savoir-faire plus efficace. Est-ce bien le cas?

Limites Pédagogiques des Ressources Multimédias pour l’Enseignement de la Phonétique Corrective

L’apprentissage de la prononciation est fondé sur l’interaction entre la langue native acquise depuis la toute jeune enfance et la langue cible possédant des caractéristiques sonores différentes. La perception et la production de la parole sont fortement contraintes par l’organisation phonologique et prosodique de la langue de l’auditeur (Cureau et Vuletic, 1976).

Pour reprendre les termes de L. Ostiguy, l’oreille de l’apprenant de langue seconde « se comporte un peu comme une oreille pathologique » puisque « les habitudes perceptives modelées par le système sonore de la langue maternelle se projettent sur la langue seconde, provoquant ainsi une sorte d’effet de filtrage » (Ostiguy, L., Sarrasin, R., Irons, G., 1996). Comment donc demander aux étudiants de niveaux débutant et intermédiaire, fortement tributaires du phonétisme et de la musique de leur langue, d’apprendre seuls en laboratoire la dimension phonétique et prosodique spécifique de la langue cible? Ils ne peuvent que calquer leur prononciation en langue étrangère sur celle de la langue native et produiront ce qu’ils entendent et non pas ce qu’ils devraient entendre. Mentionnons ici le lien étroit entre la fréquence d’exposition aux éléments sonores et la rétention et la production des apprenants : plus les étudiants sont en contact avec un élément d’apprentissage, plus la mémorisation de celui-ci est grande (Jousse, 1994). En outre, quand les activités se font de façon interactive, environnement proposé par les outils pédagogiques multimédias actuels, la rétention dans le système d’interlangue de l’apprenant est considérable.

De nos jours, de plus en plus de cours de phonétique corrective sont offerts essentiellement en environnement virtuel. À cet effet, les différents logiciels seraient censés aider l’apprenant à améliorer sa prononciation, car si celui-ci ne prononce pas correctement, le logiciel ne reconnaît pas la parole. L’utilisateur devrait alors persévérer jusqu’à ce que la machine identifie ses énoncés. En même temps, le logiciel ne fournit pas d’analyse des erreurs. Comment l’étudiant peut-il donc s’expliquer par lui-même où réside son erreur et comment la corriger? Une telle pédagogie basée sur l’auto-apprentissage naturel de la phonétique est, nous semble-t-il, d’un optimisme gigantesque.

Le Rôle Primordial de l’Enseignant

Le fait de vouloir offrir à tout prix un auto-apprentissage assuré par le numérique ne risque-t-il pas d’instaurer l’ennui et la frustration plutôt que le plaisir et la satisfaction, de légitimer l’erreur et l’approximation plutôt que la prononciation correcte? C’est pour éviter un scénario semblable que nous tenons à souligner le rôle de l’enseignant qui, avec son dynamisme et sa créativité, assure un environnement d’apprentissage stimulant et agréable. Ainsi, il effectue la correction instantanée de l’erreur, il fait prendre conscience à l’apprenant de son degré d’intelligibilité et il propose des solutions de correction. Son rôle se révèle d’autant plus incontournable que la plupart des produits multimédias se limitent à proposer des exercices d’audition et de répétition de modèles sans effectuer de correction.

Préférences Pour un Enseignement de la Phonétique Corrective en Environnement Réel

Avant chaque séance de phonétique corrective, l’enseignant doit bien distinguer les parties qui demandent la présence du professeur de celles qui
se prêtent à l’auto-apprentissage. Par ailleurs, pour travailler la phonétique, il est préférable de procéder par étapes. Chacune des leçons de correction phonétique devrait être organisée dans l’ordre suivant :

1. sensibilisation auditive à l’élément enseigné;
2. discrimination auditive;
3. production orale dirigée;
4. production orale libre.

Il est à mentionner que, dans un cours de phonétique corrective, l’approche doit être contextualisée toutes les fois que cela est possible. Il est important de concevoir l’apprenant en tant qu’être communiquant et de ne pas le limiter à produire ou reproduire sur commande des sons isolés. Il ne faut pas oublier que la prononciation représente l’aspect le plus physique, le plus corporel de la langue, et qu’elle exprime ainsi les sensations et les émotions du locuteur.

La première étape d’un cours de phonétique corrective est celle de la sensibilisation auditive. Les problèmes qui apparaissent en production cachent bien souvent des problèmes de perception (Billières, 1998). Il est nécessaire pour l’apprenant de développer sa fonction d’écoute et d’éduquer son oreille aux spécificités rythmico-mélodiques et phonétiques de la langue cible. La structuration et l’appropriation de la matière phonique se feront à partir de l’input auquel l’étudiant est exposé, c’est-à-dire le matériel sonore qui lui est proposé. La variabilité de celui-ci permet l’accès progressif aux caractéristiques sonores de la langue étrangère. Les activités de cette première étape, destinées à affiner la perception des sonorités de la langue étudiée, devraient être naturelles (Murillo, 2002) et elles devraient inclure des modèles présents dans la parole spontanée. De façon concrète, les apprenants écoutent d’abord une variété de modèles sonores et s’impliquent ensuite dans leur lecture, ce qui leur permet de percevoir leur propre production. La dimension affective étant essentielle dans tout acte de parole, il est important de faire ces activités en classe, avec la participation active du professeur et des apprenants. Cette phase terminée, les étudiants sont encouragés à renforcer individuellement leur écoute sur CAN-8 par l’audition de divers documents.

La seconde étape est celle de la discrimination auditive au cours de laquelle l’étudiant fait l’écoute d’éléments sonores dans le but de repérer l’intonation ou le son demandés. Rappelons que la perception auditive, qui est à la base de toute production orale, est affectée par des phénomènes, tels que la surdité phonologique (Polivanov, 1931) ou le crible phonologique de la langue maternelle (Troubetzkoy, 1986), qui perturbent l’identification de la langue étrangère. Il s’ensuit que le rôle du professeur s’avère primordial à des fins de correction. Le palier suivant de cette seconde étape sera le renforcement des activités de discrimination en laboratoire virtuel.

La troisième étape implique les exercices de production orale dirigée. C’est à ce stade de l’apprentissage que les différentes techniques de correction individualisée doivent entrer en scène. Il est fort conseillé qu’une grande partie de ces activités se déroulent en environnement réel et sous le contrôle direct du professeur. Des études qui ont été réalisées dans ce domaine démontrent que plus l’implication de l’apprenant dans le discours augmente, plus le degré de perception et de correction de sa parole est considérable (Ellis, 1999). Ainsi est-il important que les étudiants interagissent en environnement réel et dans des situations authentiques. C’est en tant que sujets actifs qu’ils expriment leurs désirs, leurs besoins, leurs impressions sur un plan réel ou imaginaire. En s’impliquant dans ces activités, ils veillent à ce que la forme de leur parole corresponde au message qu’ils veulent exprimer. Durant les interactions verbales avec d’autres participants de la classe, la prononciation prend toute son importance dans la transmission du message et la communication n’est pas formelle ou réduite à un échange de formules neutralisées, telle qu’elle l’aurait été en environnement virtuel. Il est important de souligner qu’à l’étape de la production orale dirigée, le rôle du professeur est d’ultime nécessité et ce, pour deux raisons principales :

- le recours au mouvement comme élément de travail en correction phonétique (Llorca, 2008);
• la correction d’un élément sonore qui doit se faire immédiatement pour éviter les risques d’enracinement des mauvaises habitudes.

Le professeur se transforme en un vrai acteur : il dessine de la main dans l’espace les mouvements mélodiques, ou encore, en travaillant sur des sons, il utilise le corps pour marquer les différences de tension. Ainsi est exprimée la relation naturelle entre la gestualité phonogène et la corporéité (Dufeu, 1992).

Quant à la correction de l’erreur qui ne doit pas tarder, le professeur peut recourir à différentes méthodes pour expliquer sa cause et pour proposer des éléments de correction. La suite logique serait l’utilisation du laboratoire virtuel qui propose un cheminement individualisé dans un environnement multimédia avec rétroaction sonore et visuelle immédiate. Néanmoins, il ne faut pas surestimer la capacité d’autocorrection des étudiants qui, à ce stade de l’apprentissage, n’ont pas encore développé les mécanismes d’autocorrection. Nonobstant le cadre d’auto-apprentissage assuré par le numérique, le rôle de l’enseignant ne devient pas moindre. Il écoute les enregistrements des étudiants en temps réel ou différé et fournit une rétroaction.

L’ultime étape de la séance de phonétique corrective est celle de la production orale libre qui stimule la créativité des participants. Il est capital d’explorer la fantaisie langagière des étudiants, car cela les aide àprofiter pleinement des sonorités de la langue, d’en prospecter leurs limites et de donner libre cours à leur imagination. Les échanges au sein du groupe sont généralement très animés et concourent aussi à l’enrichissement du code linguistique puisque l’on aborde forcément des questions de morphologie et de lexicologie, mais dans la détente et la bonne humeur.

Il est dommage que ce palier tellement important soit trop souvent négligé dans le travail en classe aux niveaux débutant et intermédiaire. Il serait faux de limiter l’entraînement phonétique à des exercices virtuels, et contre-productif de condamner ainsi l’étudiant à une interaction artificielle avec l’ordinateur.

Néanmoins, l’auto-apprentissage en environnement virtuel a aussi sa place dans un cours de correction phonétique de niveaux débutant et intermédiaire. Il est certain que le multimédia permet à l’étudiant de se retrouver dans un environnement interactif, d’avancer à son propre rythme, de gagner en autonomie et en confiance pour l’expression orale. Il ressort donc que l’enseignant a tout intérêt à proposer un environnement virtuel dans son cours de prononciation. Or, cela doit se faire de façon très mesurée, car l’auto-apprentissage en phonétique corrective en environnement multimédia est inévitablement entravé par la spécificité de la matière enseignée. Même si un certain pourcentage des étudiants de niveaux débutant et intermédiaire en bénéficient, force est de constater que la majorité des apprenants nécessite l’intervention systématique de l’enseignant. Par conséquent, le multimédia dans un domaine aus-
si particulier que la phonétique corrective, doit rester
un outil au service de l’enseignant et il ne doit en
aucun cas en devenir son substitut.

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How Much Language Do They Need? The Dilemma English-Medium Universities Face When Enrolling English as an Additional Language Students

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Although international and domestic students applying to English-medium universities may well meet the minimum language entry requirement, recent research indicates that this level of language proficiency often does not provide students with the means to cope effectively with their academic studies (Barthel, 2007; Elder, 2003; Read & Hayes, 2003). To resolve this dilemma our major, multicultural New Zealand university is addressing the problem through implementation of the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA), a post-entry programme administered to all first-year undergraduate students, regardless of their language background. We use the diagnostic outcomes to guide individual students with particular needs to appropriate forms of academic language enrichment. This paper outlines DELNA’s history and administration, student responses to the assessment and the subsequent development and uptake of language support options.

Introduction

The changing demographic of New Zealand society, largely as a result of immigration from the Pacific and Asia over the past four decades, has had a flow-on effect into the tertiary sector. In the 1990s, university teachers, very comfortable with their largely monolingual classes, gradually became aware of a changing student language profile and began to equate higher failure rates in their courses with a lower level of English language proficiency. While language is only one factor contributing to academic success, there does appear to be a level below which students are likely to be at risk of failure (Barthel, 2007; Elder, 2003; Graham, 1987). At the University of Auckland, a many-faceted pathway to university entrance means that not all students enter the University with the same English language qualification, and legally permanent residents for whom English is an additional language could not be asked to take
an English assessment not required of New Zealand citizens. It was decided, therefore, to introduce the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) as a post-entry assessment for all first-year students and to follow this with language support for those in need.

In 2001, while working with the Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, we trialled DELNA, and in 2002, the pilot was administered to some 1300 students in departments which had particularly large numbers of permanent resident English as an additional language (EAL) students. As University staff recognised that a language profile of a whole course could inform teaching and learning, the uptake of the assessment spread resulting in it becoming a requirement for all first-year students by 2006. Consequently, the number of language support options across campus increased and uptake of these, the raison d’être of DELNA, has continued to grow.

University Expectations

The University of Auckland’s (2005) intention is to “create and promote a student environment that is welcoming, enjoyable and stimulating, encouraging students to reach their full potential within a climate of academic excellence.” It also expects its graduates to have “an ability to access, identify, organise and communicate knowledge effectively in both written and spoken English” (2003). The dilemma is that almost one-third of first-year students each year are unable to take advantage of the stimulating academic environment because of their limited language proficiency, which means that graduate expectations will not be met.

Few students enter university fully equipped with academic literacy skills; many will develop them independently, but others need further instruction and considerable guided practice (Miller, 2006). As the University has spread its net to enrol domestic students from lower socio-economic groups and permanent residents with diverse language backgrounds, and has increased the number of international students (13% of the student body in 2009), students in need of instruction and practice in order to develop their academic literacy and participate successfully in their degree programmes has grown exponentially.

While it was recognised that many first-year students, irrespective of language background, required academic language instruction, permanent resident EAL students were the initial focus of DELNA. Many, particularly those with some experience of the New Zealand school system, came to the University with very good oral and social communication skills but little academic language proficiency, although they were often unaware of this (Bright & von Randow, 2008). On the other hand, international students, who gained entrance with the required International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Band, were not a focus until it became obvious that while this gave them university entry it did not mean they would cope effortlessly with the language demands of their degree programmes (Barthel, 2007; Elder, 2003; Read & Hayes, 2003). Therefore, we made the decision to simply include all first-year students in the DELNA process.

Identifying students’ academic English language proficiency at the outset of their studies meant that intervention, where necessary, could begin immediately, allowing them to develop their language skills concurrently with their studies so that they can participate more quickly and more confidently in their courses.

DELNA: A Two-Tiered Assessment

DELNA comprises an initial 30-minute online screening assessment made up of an academic vocabulary task and a text-editing task, and a finer diagnostic tool – two-hour pen and paper diagnosis of listening, reading, and writing skills.

All first-year students take the online screening, which effectively filters out those (approximately 73%) whose English proficiency will allow them to develop their academic literacy independently. This

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1 The DELNA Handbook can be found at http://www.delna.auckland.ac.nz/delna_handbook.pdf
helps us to quickly and cost-effectively screen over 6,000 first-year students each year. Furthermore, even highly proficient English-speaking students, intrigued with the online assessment, show little reluctance to comply (Read, 2008). Students are immediately notified by email that either (a) their language skills are appropriate for university study; (b) they should brush up their language skills at the Student Learning Centre or at the English Language Self Access Centre; or (c) they should book an appointment to do the diagnosis so that we can identify their language needs and guide them to specific language enrichment programmes.

Diagnostic results are reported on a six-point Band scale: students in Bands 4 and 5 are at risk of failing university courses; those in Band 6 are in need of further English instruction; those in Band 7 may need to work independently on their language skills; and the language skills of high scoring students (Bands 8 and 9) are “unlikely to hamper their academic progress” (Elder, 2003, p.15).

Students receive a language profile with a detailed description of how their proficiency in each skill may affect their academic performance. Those with an average DELNA Band above 6.5 receive their profiles by email, while those with an average DELNA Band below 6.5 are asked to meet with the DELNA Language Adviser to collect and discuss the implications of their profiles and the language support that will suit their degree programme. These options include: academic writing, reading, and listening credit courses at both first and second year; discipline-specific language tutorials in the Business School, Film, Television and Media Studies, Engineering, and Theology; online resources; one-on-one advice and discussion groups at the English Language Self Access Centre; and writing workshops and generic university skills programmes at the Student Learning Centre. While DELNA has become a requirement, language support has been compulsory only in some business courses and Engineering; this is now spreading to Pharmacy, Nursing, and Education. In 2009, the Faculty of Arts joined this group making DELNA and the uptake of appropriate academic writing credit courses mandatory for mature students returning to tertiary study after a break of some years.

The Student Response

The University has accepted its responsibility to help students develop their academic language proficiency in order to make the most of their studies. It funds DELNA so that it is free for students, encourages the introduction of appropriate language support within faculties, and makes both the Student Learning Centre and the English Language Self Access Centre freely available. Students have a responsibility to help themselves, too, by not only taking DELNA, but also by accessing further language development as advised, which is more effective if they are motivated (Read, 2008).

Initially, we emailed DELNA diagnostic profiles with follow-up advice directly to students and, at the end of that semester, invited them to complete an anonymous online evaluation of their experience with the assessment, studying in English, and taking up language support. Feedback indicated that students were not responding to the advice about language support and we realised we could fix this with a one-on-one interview to discuss their profiles, which many requested. In 2004, the DELNA Academic Language Adviser was appointed and students began to respond positively to the idea that working on their academic English language skills would enhance their university experience.

The presentation of DELNA, from the outset, has been consciously positive (Read, 2008): it is a ‘diagnosis’ not a ‘test’; it is low stakes; it is not a selection tool; it does not affect a student’s course choices; there is no pass or fail; and it is free. In spite of this, some students have continued to resist. More seriously, analysis of grades with anecdotal evidence from the University’s Counselling Service have shown that these students, approximately 1,000 out of a first-year student intake of approximately 7,000, are largely those most in need. It took some six years to gain wide student acceptance of DELNA; the next step is to have 100% acceptance and to continue to increase the uptake of language support.

Increasing this uptake, the most important step in the process, is our challenge. A longitudinal interview study of 18 students, three New Zealand citizens, 10 permanent residents, and five interna-
tional students (Bright & von Randow, 2004, 2008), coupled with the online student evaluations, highlighted the issues surrounding this and revealed students’ attitudes to language support and the role language proficiency played in their final grades. Time, timetable restraints, family commitments, and the fact that they expected their lecturers and tutors to provide language support were given as reasons for non-compliance. When asked to supply a metaphor to describe their first-year experience in an English-medium university, interviewees talked of drowning, being buried alive, being in a black hole, struggling uphill with a heavy pack, and in short, suffering and feeling unable to do anything to help themselves.

When 11 of these students were asked on completion of their degrees what they would have done differently, they emphasized that they would have seen the Language Adviser, had that person been available, post DELNA, and taken up the advice. What they advised first-year students in their position to do was what they had largely failed to do: make friends with students whose first language was English and work on language skills consciously from day one.

For students whose language proficiency puts them in the at risk category, it is difficult to take this advice, as coping with course work leaves little time for extra language support. When this is embedded in the course itself, or course related, students have access to discipline-specific language support which is relevant and therefore more effective (Barthel, 2007), they are more likely to attend. This is, therefore, the model we are promoting across the University as faculties take more responsibility for their students’ identified academic language needs.

Conclusion

After eight years of using DELNA, the University of Auckland has become increasingly aware of the academic language needs of its first-year students, and has put measures in place to help students work on these so that they make the most of their university experience and reach their potential.

By assessing all first-year students, irrespective of their language background, DELNA alerts students to the new academic language environment and their need to adapt to it. We are then able to reassure those whose specific language needs are identified, and who then see the DELNA Language Adviser, that they will be helped to acquire the appropriate language skills, but that they too have a role to play in making this happen. Those who avoid DELNA and experience failure and subsequent stress are a concern and we continue to work with faculties and the University Counselling Service to have them acknowledge the benefit of working on their language skills to increase their chance of success and to enhance their whole university experience.

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**Biography**

Janet von Randow has managed the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) since its introduction at the University of Auckland in 2002 and has presented the related research at many conferences both in New Zealand and overseas. She first joined the University teaching in the Graduate Diploma of Secondary Teaching after a long career in modern language teaching. Her research interests include language assessment, second language acquisition, and the first-year university experience.
Two Models for Introducing Graduate Students to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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Graduate students aspiring to become faculty members should be provided with meaningful opportunities to explore the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and to formulate questions about student learning and effective teaching. To this end, teaching and learning centres should incorporate SoTL-oriented components within the framework of educational development programs to prepare our future faculty. This article briefly reviews the emerging literature on graduate student engagement with SoTL and highlights two possible approaches for incorporating SoTL into educational development programs for graduate students.

With its theoretical roots in Ernest Boyer’s Scholarship Reconsidered (1990), the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) movement could be likened to a massive tidal wave, rapidly transforming the educational “seascape.” SoTL invites educators to engage in a systematic study of teaching and learning and to make the results of this research public through presentations, performances, or publications (McKinney, 2006). A number of studies have highlighted the individual and institutional benefits that can be derived from SoTL engagement. Surveys of faculty members engaged in SoTL research suggest that these academics experience greater excitement in their teaching and become more interested in broader teaching and learning issues (Ciccone & Meyers, 2006; Huber & Hutchings, 2005). Most made changes to course designs and learning assessments in response to their research results, highlighting the integration between classroom research and classroom instruction (Huber & Hutchings, 2005). Moreover, many of the respondents reported that their SoTL had a positive influence on teaching in their departments beyond their own practice and influenced colleagues outside of their departments (Ciccone & Meyers, 2006). O’Meara (2005)
found that institutions that promoted SoTL in addition to traditional disciplinary scholarship reported a heightened campus focus on the quality of undergraduate learning and greater gains in the value associated with teaching in the tenure and promotion process.

In response to the growing momentum of the SoTL movement, teaching and learning centres across Canada have developed programming to equip faculty members with the resources and skills necessary to surf the SoTL wave. Institutions have created funding opportunities, such as the Research on Teaching Small Grants Program at the University of Western Ontario or the President’s Teaching & Learning Scholars Program at the University of Regina, and have established communities of practice, such as the University of Waterloo’s Teaching-Based Research Group. With these programs focusing primarily on the needs of current faculty members, the future professoriate – graduate students – remain largely on the periphery of the Canadian SoTL community and risk being trapped in its wake unless resources are developed to engage them in this emerging field of research.

In recent years, several scholars have called for the restructuring of graduate education to enhance the status of SoTL within the academy (Kreber, 2001; McKinney, 2006). Shulman (2004), among others, argues that SoTL should be formally integrated into the graduate experience so that “we may create scholars who learn early on how to elegantly integrate their teaching with their research” (p. 10). The new and evolving nature of SoTL as a mode of inquiry offers educational developers a myriad of programming choices and opportunities; however, it also creates challenges in the graduate training context. Among the most significant is a lack of theoretical frameworks or best practices to guide the development of effective SoTL programs targeted at a graduate audience. Although few such models exist, a particularly useful one, proposed by Gale and Golde (2004), identifies four critical stages of SoTL training for future faculty:

1. Exposure – Graduate students read and critique SoTL research to develop an understanding of the ways in which such work is communicated to the next generation of scholars.
2. Encounter – Graduate students examine, in greater depth, the mechanisms for carrying out SoTL research, such as qualitative and quantitative research approaches, data collection tools, analytical methods, and the peer review process.
3. Engagement – Graduate students engage in their own SoTL design project and carry out independent SoTL research.
4. Extension – Graduate students become mentors for the next cohort of students engaging in SoTL research.

This model could serve as an excellent organizational framework to inform educational developers in their design of graduate student SoTL programming. As new programs emerge, it will be important for developers to examine the specific elements and characteristics of these programs to ensure that students are receiving ample opportunities to engage in all stages of SoTL development. In the following sections, we examine two graduate student SoTL approaches according to the Gale and Golde (2004) framework, assessing their successes and identifying opportunities for further growth.

**University of Waterloo: Research Project on a Teaching/Learning Issue**

The Centre for Teaching Excellence at the University of Waterloo offers the Certificate in University Teaching (CUT), a campus-wide, comprehensive educational development program for graduate students interested in academic careers. As part of the teaching certificate, the students are asked to complete a small research project about a teaching and/or learning issue in higher education by drawing on ten articles in teaching periodicals. The goals of the
Introducing Graduate Students to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

A research project are to: 1) gain an awareness of the higher education research literature; and 2) communicate a distillation of theories and application of ideas both in written and oral formats (Centre for Teaching Excellence, 2009). A schematic of the four-stage SoTL project incorporated in Waterloo’s teaching certificate is presented in Figure 1. This project is based on the premise that graduate students need to be introduced to SoTL in an organized and systematic way with opportunities for feedback and guidance during the key stages of the process.

Graduate students in the certificate program begin their research project by attending a two-hour workshop entitled “Finding Educational Literature,” which was developed and is offered in partnership with academic librarians. The workshop introduces them to a range of discipline-specific and interdisciplinary periodicals on teaching and learning and offers hands-on practice in using common education databases. Following the workshop, the students attend a small-group consultation session with the educational developer from the teaching unit. During this session, they share their research topics and research questions, outline the structure of their projects, and talk about the articles that they have consulted. The participants also provide each other with feedback on their projects and share strategies for searching the literature. Upon completion of their literature review, graduate students choose to present their findings in any one of the following formats: 1) a 20-page research paper; 2) a 45 minute workshop; or 3) a research poster. These products are then shared with fellow CUT participants in sessions hosted by the Centre for Teaching Excellence. Each term, five graduate students present their completed research projects. The topics selected by students range from discipline-specific questions about teaching and learning to broader dilemmas of teaching in higher education. As an example, this past year one graduate student reviewed the literature on various models of multiple-choice testing and introduced a new model for designing multiple-choice assessments. Another graduate student examined the literature on grade inflation in Canadian universities and, drawing on current information from the registrar, compared these findings to the situation at the University of Waterloo. Some students were able to disseminate the outcomes of their projects at colloquia, conferences and campus-based publications.

University of Western Ontario: Advanced Teaching Program Capstone Project

The Advanced Teaching Program (ATP), one of a number of intensive teacher development programs available to graduate students through the Teaching Support Centre (TSC) at the University of Western Ontario, is designed to address the specific needs of experienced teaching assistants (TAs) interested in transitioning into the role of independent instructor. Successful completion of the ATP requires the fulfillment of three distinct program elements: 1) at-
tendance at a workshop series that highlights, among other topics, the development of learning outcomes, the establishment and maintenance of classroom civility, and authentic assessment of student learning; 2) participation in two unique role-playing sessions where graduate students have the opportunity to respond to challenging classroom situations in the moment and receive feedback from a small group of peers and an experienced facilitator; and 3) preparation and presentation of a one-hour seminar about discipline-specific teaching innovations or challenges to members of their home department.

This third element of the program, called the capstone project, offers graduate students concrete opportunities to explore SoTL literature and to act as ambassadors of scholarly teaching in their departments. To complete the capstone project, participants submit a 3-5 page seminar proposal that includes a review of at least five teaching-related scholarly articles. Similar to the Waterloo model, participants have opportunities throughout ATP to gain feedback on their developing proposal from both peers and ATP instructors. Upon submission of the finalized proposal, graduate students engage in a 45-minute one-on-one consultation with an educational developer to discuss the SoTL underpinnings of their seminar, receiving both oral and written feedback.

Instructional developers then work closely with these graduate students and departments to identify appropriate venues for the presentation of the student seminars. In the past year, two such workshops (“Primary Literature School: Helping Science & Social Science Students Decode Research” and “TA Evaluations: Getting, Interpreting & Acting on Formative Feedback”) were presented at the campus-wide Winter Conference on Teaching; a third (“Impostor Syndrome: Strategies for Rising Above”) was presented as part of the physics department graduate student colloquium; and a fourth (“Writing to Learn: Exploratory Writing in the Undergraduate Classroom”) was presented to a mixed group of faculty and graduate students at a philosophy brown-bag lunch seminar series. In this way, graduate students share the SoTL literature with numerous colleagues across campus while building strong and synergistic links to existing campus-wide programs offered through Western’s Teaching Support Centre.

Common Characteristics of the Two Projects

One of the defining features of both projects is the comprehensive mentoring that graduate students receive at all stages of the research process. From introductory workshops on the exploration of education-related periodicals through in-depth, one-on-one consultations about seminar proposals, graduate students’ forays into SoTL literature are organized as a series of well-defined and guided steps designed to make the task of navigating SoTL research less daunting.

Implicit in both projects is the notion that graduate students have the potential to be enthusiastic, creative, and dynamic proponents of SoTL in the wider university community. Thus, their projects are presented in public venues to inform and spark discussion among interested colleagues. Both the presenting graduate students and their audience gain pedagogical knowledge, while simultaneously gaining insights into SoTL methodologies and research approaches. Informal conversations with participants of both the CUT and ATP programs also reveal that the skills and knowledge developed through the completion of these projects prove helpful during their search for faculty positions. Several program participants incorporated their discipline-specific understanding of the SoTL literature into their teaching philosophy statements and teaching portfolios; some discussed these ideas with hiring committees during academic interviews.

While project models at both Western and Waterloo offer participants opportunities to explore and critique the SoTL literature and communicate their understandings to the academic community, graduate students are not required to design or carry out their own research studies. Thus, both projects function largely at the Exposure and Encounter levels of the Gale and Golde (2004) model. Achieving greater graduate student participation at the Engage and Extend levels will require that greater efforts be made to communicate the benefits of practicing SoTL work to this cohort and that opportunities be made available for graduates to participate in genuine SoTL research. Currently, no formal mechanisms
exist at either institution for graduate students to be mentored by faculty engaging in SoTL research, nor can graduate students apply directly to receive internal funding in support of a SoTL project. To encourage greater SoTL involvement by graduate students, these institutions might consider, among numerous options, formal inclusion of interested graduate students in SoTL research communities, the development of workshops about SoTL research methodologies specifically targeted to graduate students, the establishment of panel sessions facilitated by faculty members engaging in SoTL research, and the creation of online resources highlighting the benefits of engaging in SoTL work.

**Continued Opportunities for Growth and Expansion**

As evidenced by our recent presentations at the 2009 Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) conference and those of several colleagues at other national and international conferences, there is a growing interest among Canadian educational developers to share ideas and strategies for engaging graduate students in SoTL. While graduate student programs with a SoTL focus are emerging across the country, much of the development is occurring at a “grass roots level” (Christensen Hughes, 2006) with little communication among educational developers and between centres. In comparison, colleagues in the US are quickly embarking on collaborative initiatives including the formation of a multi-institutional Carnegie Academy’s for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Student Voice in SoTL Group and the publication of a text co-authored by faculty and students entitled Engaging Student Voices in the Study of Teaching and Learning (Werder & Otis, 2009). To our knowledge, such formal, multi-institutional conversations and networks around graduate student engagement in SoTL have yet to emerge within the Canadian context.

Through discussions initiated at STLHE 2009, the authors of this paper – educational developers who work closely with graduate students – realized that they shared common interests and faced a number of common challenges when implementing SoTL programming at their institutions and that these issues could be of relevance to other developers in Canada. A brief review of some of the Canadian teaching training programs with a SoTL component suggests that there are significant variations in models and approaches used to introduce graduate students to SoTL. These variations are particularly evident in the following areas: 1) the extent to which graduate students are exposed to the SoTL literature and engage in SoTL research; 2) the types of SoTL projects undertaken by graduate students; 3) the support provided to graduate students conducting SoTL projects; and 4) the requirements for dissemination of project results.

To our knowledge, no attempts have been made by Canadian educational developers to formally document these approaches, examine their effectiveness or assess the impact of SoTL projects on the academic careers of graduate students. With the support of an Educational Developers Caucus grant, the authors have embarked on a research project that aims to create a national “map” of current SoTL initiatives aimed at graduate students. Using a combination of surveys and in-depth interviews, we are documenting SoTL engagement models emerging from different institutions, uncovering challenges that may be hindering the delivery of such programming to graduate students, highlighting opportunities for the creation of additional programming, and identifying potential synergies and collaborations among developers working in this area. We look forward to sharing the results of this research with the higher education community at STLHE 2010.

**References**


**Biography**

Natasha Patrito Hannon is an Educational Developer with the Teaching Support Centre (TSC) at The University of Western Ontario, where she coordinates instructional development programs for graduate students and faculty in scientific and engineering disciplines.

Svitlana Taraban-Gordon is a Senior Instructional Developer with the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) at the University of Waterloo, where she coordinates instructional development programs for domestic and international teaching assistants.
L’Accès et la Réussite au Postsecondaire pour les Étudiants Issus de Groupes Sous-Representés : Un Défi Collectif

Marie-Jeanne Monette & W. Alan Wright
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Le présent article présente les domaines d’intervention et des programmes canadiens qui ont pour objectif l’amélioration de l’accès et la persévérance des étudiants des groupes sous-représentés (notamment les étudiants autochtones, ceux provenant de familles à faible revenu et les étudiants de première génération) dans les études postsecondaires. Suivant des recherches financées par la Fondation Canadienne des Bourses d’Études du Millénaire, les auteurs proposent une approche holistique pour aider ces étudiants à surmonter les nombreux obstacles auxquels ils font face à divers moment de leur vie étudiante.

Selon le gouvernement du Canada, « 70 pour cent de tous les nouveaux emplois créés au Canada exigent une forme d’éducation postsecondaire et seulement six pour cent des nouveaux emplois seront occupés par ceux qui n’ont pas terminé l’école secondaire » (RHDCC, 2002).

L’accès à ce niveau d’éducation n’est pas équitable pour tous. Les études postsecondaires (ÉPS) devraient être ouvertes à toute personne désireuse d’y accéder et ayant le potentiel pour réussir. Pourtant, certains groupes d’individus y sont présents en très faible nombre. Notre gouvernement et les employeurs auront-ils un nombre suffisant de travailleurs qualifiés dans les années à venir? Comment aider les élèves qui, pour des raisons indépendantes de leurs volontés, n’accèdent pas aux études postsecondaires? Selon Grayson (2003) le nombre élevé de décrocheurs et d’étudiants du secondaire qui n’entreprennent pas d’études postsecondaires a de graves conséquences pour les établissements d’études supérieures, pour les étudiants eux-mêmes et pour la société. Il est bien connu qu’un nombre important d’étudiants éprouvent des difficultés au cours de leurs années d’études postsecondaires. Des recherches antérieures affirmaient qu’environ 24 pour cent quittaient dans les 18 mois suivant leur entrée. Cependant, pour la première fois au Canada, de nouvelles données nous permettent de croire que le taux de décrochage serait moindre. Une étude longitudinale de Finnie et Qiu (dans Finnie et al., 2008, chap.9) permet de constater que ceux qui abandonnent le font pour changer de programme, aller vers une autre institution ou encore prendre une pause.
dans la poursuite de leurs études. Le taux de persévérance serait plutôt de 82 pour cent au niveau collégial et de 89,8 pour cent au niveau universitaire. Cette nouvelle encourageante ne doit pas nous éloigner de la question de la persévérance. Elle reste un problème pour les étudiants à risque et pour ceux qui abandonnent. L’arrivée d’étudiants de groupes sous-représentés dans les établissements d’éducation postsecondaire pourrait apporter un nouveau défi tant au niveau de l’accès qu’à celui de la persévérance.

Quels sont les acteurs qui, dans les collèges et les universités canadiens, relèveront ce défi collectif? Nous prétendons, dans le présent article, que les professeurs, les départements académiques, les employés des bureaux pédagogiques ainsi que les employés des services aux étudiants doivent travailler ensemble afin de résoudre ce problème de manière holistique. Est-ce que les pédagogues des établissements postsecondaires se dévouent à cette cause?

**Obstacles à Surmonter**

Les obstacles à l’accès aux ÉPS et à la persévérance sont nombreux et interviennent à divers moments de la vie d’un étudiant. Selon Galand et al. (2005) ces obstacles revêtent une plus grande signification pour les groupes sous-représentés, comme les étudiants autochtones, ceux provenant de familles à faible revenu et les étudiants de première génération aux études postsecondaires. L’identification de ces obstacles permet aux établissements non seulement de mieux connaître les besoins de cette clientèle, mais aussi d’élaborer des stratégies plus appropriées et efficaces pour lui faciliter l’accès aux ÉPS. Wright et al. (2008) proposent une liste des obstacles auxquels font face ces étudiants: le manque d’aspiration, la faible estime de soi et le manque de confiance, la préparation scolaire inadéquate, les finances insuffisantes, le manque de connaissances sur les ÉPS et les choix de carrière, la méconnaissance des établissements postsecondaires, le manque de soutien, etc. Les institutions doivent se préparer à une clientèle confrontée à plusieurs défis. La problématique de l’accès et de la persévérance ne se résoudra pas sans la compréhension globale des caractéristiques et des besoins de cette clientèle. Wright et al. (2008) regroupent les obstacles identifiés sous les catégories suivantes: finance; environnement familial, culturel et social; préparation scolaire; aspiration; estime de soi; obstacles institutionnels; bien-être; et motivation. Selon Finnie et al. (2008), certains obstacles sont plus déterminants que d’autres. Il y en a même qui ne dépendent pas de l’individu, comme l’environnement familial, par exemple. Comment s’attaquer à ces obstacles? Les tableaux 1 et 2, élaborés par Wright et al. (2008), présentent des domaines d’intervention afin de mieux prévoir des stratégies d’action.

**Tableau 1**  
*Domaines d’intervention pour l’accès*

![Tableau 1](image)
Améliorer l’Accès et la Persévérance

Doit-on revoir les critères d’admission afin d’attirer les étudiants issus des groupes sous-représentés? Tandis que certaines institutions prévoient quelques places dans leurs programmes pour les étudiants ciblés (le Nova Scotia Community College), d’autres offrent des cours préparatoires qui donnent ensuite accès à un programme d’ÉPS (Seneca Centre for Outreach Education et l’université Lakehead en Ontario). Les établissements postsecondaires doivent identifier des stratégies variées et adaptées à leur clientèle. Celles à l’interne ont pour but d’amener les étudiants vers leur établissement et de les aider à faire la transition. Les mesures vers l’extérieur sont celles qui permettent aux institutions de travailler en collaboration avec des représentants d’autres secteurs. Les programmes de recrutement et de sensibilisation sont très importants pour atteindre cette clientèle, car, très tôt, ils éliminent eux-mêmes la possibilité de poursuivre des études postsecondaires. Nombreux sont ceux qui décrochent avant la fin de leurs études secondaires ou qui les terminent en y consacrant un minimum d’effort et croient que les études postsecondaires sont inaccessibles. Ils possèdent très peu d’informations sur les programmes offerts dans les établissements d’ÉPS, sur les choix de carrière et sur toutes les possibilités qui leur sont offertes, y compris les possibilités de financement. Le financement est un obstacle constant pour les étudiants des groupes sous-représentés. Ils ne voient pas la relation valeur/coût des ÉPS.

L’accès aux ÉPS, condition préalable à la réussite, relève à la fois de la responsabilité de l’étudiant et de l’institution. Le décrochage est un problème et il faut trouver des moyens pour amener les étudiants à persévérer. Les établissements d’ÉPS ont un grand rôle à jouer et plusieurs programmes ont été expérimentés afin d’augmenter la persévérance, surtout chez les étudiants de première année. Les auteurs d’une étude basée sur le fonctionnement de treize établissements d’ÉPS aux États-Unis ont identifié vingt initiatives qui contribuent à la réussite en première année. Elles sont :

- « Conseils/orientation;
- Centralisation des activités de consultation;
- Lecture commune;
- Convocations;
- Programme de base/cours de formation générale;
- Portfolios électroniques;
- Apprentissage par l’expérience;
- Perfectionnement du corps professoral;
Séminaires à l’intention des étudiants de première année;
Communautés d’apprentissage;
Arts libéraux;
Mentorat;
Orientation;
Leaders/conseillers choisis parmi les pairs;
Hébergement en résidence;
Services innovateurs;
Programmes scolaires estivaux;
Cours d’appoint;
Centres d’apprentissage » (Barefoot et al., 2005).
Toujours selon ces auteurs, une approche globale et intégrée peut favoriser la réussite en première année. Ils proposent donc cinq critères pour évaluer l’efficacité d’une initiative qui contribue au succès des étudiants:
« Évaluation interne des approches adoptées;
Soutien administratif soutenu;
Participation de nombreux intervenants — corps professoral, administrateurs et spécialistes des services aux étudiants;
Incidence importante des mesures au sein de la population des étudiants de première année, notamment auprès des membres de groupes sous-représentés » (Barefoot et al., 2005).

Afin de bien faire face, de façon holistique, au défi du décrochage par les étudiants aux études post-secondaires, il est évident que les stratégies les plus importantes et les initiatives les plus efficaces décrites ici exigent une collaboration étroite entre les pédagogues, l’administration académique et le personnel des services aux étudiants. Plusieurs institutions canadiennes expérimentent des programmes qui connaissent un certain succès. Toutefois, il est aisé de constater que les solutions proposées par ces institutions sont plutôt partielles, dénuées d’une vision d’ensemble du problème persistant du décrochage.

Programmes Institutionnels Canadiens

 Certaines institutions canadiennes ont connu du suc-
Québec en Forme, au Québec, est un programme fondé par un organisme privé en partenariat avec le gouvernement provincial, des chercheurs du milieu universitaire, les écoles primaires et le milieu communautaire. Sa mission est d’aider les enfants des milieux défavorisés à surmonter les obstacles qui nuisent à leur développement. Le but du programme est d’améliorer, au moyen de l’activité physique, la condition physique et l’intégration sociale, deux facteurs favorables à la réussite scolaire.


Certains programmes et institutions focalisent leurs efforts sur des stratégies d’accès et d’autres plutôt sur le succès. Les facteurs les plus communs sont le partenariat, l’intervention précoce, la transition et le financement. Chacun des programmes comporte des stratégies efficaces qui, dans une approche globale, sont positives mais insuffisantes.

Conclusion

Le défi des établissements d’ÉPS est de partager leurs ressources entre les deux enjeux. Cet article, basé sur la recherche effectuée par Wright et al., (2008) propose une approche globale qui tient compte des deux enjeux simultanément afin d’obtenir des résultats à long terme. L’approche ici préconisée débute par une compréhension globale des caractéristiques et des besoins de la clientèle cible. Elle implique aussi tous les niveaux institutionnels dans une démarche coordonnée, des politiques d’admission aux politiques pour la persistance et la réussite, incluant une pédagogie adaptée à toute la clientèle. Les professeurs et les centres pédagogiques institutionnels ont un rôle important à jouer dans les collèges et les universités canadiens. Cette approche intègre également de multiples groupes d’intervenants du postsecondaire et de l’extérieur, incluant des ressources communautaires. L’accès et la réussite des groupes sous-représentés ne seront possibles que s’il y a un engagement des sources de financement privées et publiques. Enfin, l’approche prônée ici devra tenir compte des besoins reliés à chacune des étapes chronologiques: l’intervention précoce, la transition, la première année et la poursuite des années d’études. Ce défi collectif majeur requiert la collaboration de tous ceux et de toutes celles qui œuvrent dans le secteur des études postsecondaires afin de créer un système plus juste et équitable pour tous les Canadiens.

Références


**Biographie**

Marie-Jeanne Monette est auxiliaire de recherche à l’université de Windsor et s’intéresse à la réussite et à la persévérance des étudiants.

W. Alan Wright est vice-provost à l’enseignement et à l’apprentissage à l’université de Windsor. Il s’intéresse au rôle du personnel des centres pédagogiques dans l’enseignement supérieur pour la réussite des étudiants.
Exploring Motivational and Learning Differences With Mature Students in Post-Secondary Education

William C. Murray, Leslie Smith, & Keith Nielson
New Brunswick Community College

This study examines the differences that exist among various age cohorts attending a post-secondary educational institution. Respondents were from the New Brunswick Community College’s six separate campuses (n=251). Significant differences were found to exist predominantly around social and family issues. Although differences did appear based on age groupings, a small amount of variation appeared when compared with theoretical literature. The largest barrier to post-secondary education that existed, regardless of age, was the financial burden placed upon the learner.

Introduction

The authors of this study, as educators and students respectively in post-secondary education, shine a light on the motivational and learning needs of mature students in the community college system. In classrooms across the country, there is a visible shift in the age of students returning to study, noted experientially by the authors and within the national media (Tamburri, 2009). When coupled with a reduced number of younger students, related directly to lower birth rates over the last 20 years, educators are facing new challenges when developing and managing the learning environment.

The motivational issues among student groups gains more salience when the increase in the number of mature students returning to college for retraining is blended with a continually shrinking pool of younger students. This research seeks to unpack some of the motivational and learning differences that exist for mature students, results that may very well transfer throughout post-secondary educational systems. As Lowy (2007) stated, “the flip side of every dilemma is the opportunity for insight” (p. 86). Although the differences among age cohorts may present a dilemma for educations, there is also a great opportunity to learn and adapt.

Changing Student Demographics

Post-secondary education continues to be an attractive option for people searching for employment, whether
a new job or a better job. This is reinforced by James Knight, President of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges: “a college diploma or applied degree is a ticket to a job” (Tamburri, 2009). The training supplied by colleges, when combined with recognized credentials, is a very attractive combination to those who are without work. The attraction is drawing older students seeking skill upgrading and retraining, changing the face of learners in post-secondary education throughout North America. In fact, mature students are enrolling at a faster rate than the traditional high school target audience (Tamburri, 2009).

The change in demographics of our learners brings into question many of the traditional assumptions made by educators of students in higher education programs. As learners ourselves, the authors have firsthand experiences with the changing educational pressures faced by different age cohorts. Research has been done that theoretically explores both internal and external factors influencing the learning experience of different student age-cohorts (Bamber & Tett, 2000; O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007). O’Donnell and Tobbell (2007) reinforce the differences by age group of learners, specifically around varying career experiences, family situations, and prior educational experiences.

Additionally, for the mature or “non-traditional” student group, the learning environment may seem alien and may require a larger amount of negotiated change to the external environment. Bamber and Tett’s (2000) work highlights that non-traditional students hold a very different disposition towards their learning, with a stronger focus on practical skill outcomes as they progress through their professional upgrading. These sentiments are reinforced by Lundberg (2003) who suggests adult student performance is benefited by strong social relationships and they overcome barriers using improved time management skills acquired through life experiences.

**Project Development**

The genesis of this study came from two complementary streams of interest by the author team. As part of his college studies in 2008, Nielson led a group of his peers in a marketing research assignment to satisfy the requirements of course work in his program of study. As a mature student himself, Nielson noted obvious behavioural differences between younger and more mature students within his own class on a daily basis. From this, Nielson adapted his marketing/consumer behaviour project in an effort to gain a better understanding of the dynamics among age clusters within his own management class. At the same time, Smith was crafting a theoretical paper on mature learners within higher education, exploring key cohort differences in learning motivations and styles. These two streams were blended together by Murray as the framework for a large quantitative study on motivational issues and barriers in the post-secondary system.

**Studying the Students**

The original questionnaire developed by Nielson for his class work served as the starting point for this research, from which the authors expanded upon the variety of questions for consideration. It was at this point that the authors were reminded of the contention that a “camel is a horse designed by a committee;” the list of questions became unwieldy due to the various directions of the authors, creating a challenge in limiting the number of questions. Fortunately, a large and validated study had been completed just three years earlier (Kimmel & McNeese, 2006) focusing on motivational issues of adult learners.\(^1\) As Kimmel had centred her analysis specifically on gender and ethnicity variances, she generously agreed to supply her original survey instrument for our study rooted in age-based differences.

From this, the authors refocused their questions around three key themes: motivators, barriers, and attitudes and values. All questions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Many questions focused specifically on the learning environment; how-

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\(^1\) Due to the size limitations for submissions to *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*, a copy of the questionnaire used could not be included. Contact for additional information should be made to the primary author.
ever, some questions clearly explored the personal domains of students, including family pressures and career goals. Age groupings were adopted from prior studies conducted within the New Brunswick Community College’s (NBCC) system on academic readiness in order to facilitate future data comparison across studies.

The Chief Learning Officer of NBCC granted the authors both ethics approval and permission to contact all students at the six English campuses via the student email system. This allowed the authors to take a census approach, contacting all registered students simultaneously, a population in 2009 that slightly exceeded 3,500 students according to campus registrars.

Highlighting the Differences

Two hundred and fifty-one completed surveys were received over the seven day collection period for a response rate just below 7% over all six campuses. It is not uncommon for students within this population to be lax in regularly checking their college email accounts, a limit to this collection method. However, the responses received varied well among groupings, with 53% of respondents under the age of 25, 14% between the ages of 25 and 29, and the remaining 33% of respondents 30 years of age or older. Aggregated results from the Likert scale ratings were analyzed by ranking means via SPSS V14 to identify preferences in each of the four established themes. MANOVA testing was completed to establish statistically significant differences for each question by age grouping. Although a number of variations between age groups emerged, no more than 25% of questions in any topic area revealed differences; a number of these are investigated below.

Motivations

From the results provided for all 15 motivation-based questions, only five showed any significant difference among age groups as indicated in Table 1. From this data, we realized that external factors, specifically around family stage, had a significant influence on the desire to pursue higher education. Younger students were much more influenced by encouragement from teachers and mentors (F=6.612; p<0.01), while more mature students drew on encouragement from their spouses (F=10.664; p<0.001) and children (F=39.128; p<0.001); younger students have fewer spouses and children, while older students have moved beyond the influences of their teachers. This indicates that each age cohort draws on specific contextual influencers in their decision making process.

Additionally, we were able to demonstrate that the desire to begin a new career was significantly different among age groups (F=3.393; p<0.05). This feeling jumped significantly from respondents in the youngest group to those in the middle age group (p<0.001), indicating an increased focus on career related issues as age rises. This is a curious result, indicating the students in their late twenties are at a critical career juncture and perhaps have not yet experienced a satisfying career experience. Further investigation into this facet through focus groups or

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational Rankings (means with ranking level in parenthesis)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggregated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to begin a new career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from my spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from my teacher/mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to be a role model for my children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from my children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in-depth interviews may reveal additional insight.

Barriers

Reflective of prior theoretical studies, Table 2 shows there to be a stronger barrier for more mature learners with concern to time spent away from their families (F=6.349; p<0.01). Students older than 24 years of age demonstrated greater concern (p<0.01), logically correlating to the fact that this group will have a higher percentage of both spouses and children. This external factor is not a barrier of importance with traditional younger learners.

One fascinating attitude difference that emerged was the comfort level learners had attending classes with students younger than themselves (F=30.394; p<0.001). The oldest age cohort held the strongest concern about attending classes with younger students (p<0.001), ranking it as their fourth highest barrier issue, above concerns about their own personal abilities. From this, instructors need to be cognizant of comfort levels among age-based cohorts and perhaps dedicate resources towards group integration activities.

Attitudes and values

The area encompassing attitudes and values that learners hold towards their higher education did reveal a few fascinating differences as shown in Table 3. Firstly, the different age cohorts expressed differences in contentment with instructors teaching to them (F=11.028; p<0.001). The youngest cohort was extremely content to have the instructor teach to them, ranking it third among 36 different attitude questions and differing from the oldest cohort (p=0.001) who ranked this factor twentieth.

Secondly, perceptions of equality differed among the cohorts (F=6.455; p<0.01); the oldest cohort placed little value being seen as an equal within the classroom, a perception that is extremely important to the younger cohorts (p<0.01). Finally, the attitude around how challenging a learner finds their particular program of study showed a wide variety of responses (F=5.506; p<0.01). The youngest cohort believed their current program is significantly less challenging to them than the older cohorts (p=0.01). Perhaps the challenge faced by the older cohort is due to the length of time after formal studies and the comfort level within the learning environment.

Discussion

Overall, the variations among age groups were far fewer than was inferred from prior literature. Although a few key areas did have significant differences, no more than 25% of questions in any particular topic area revealed age-related issues. The majority of distinctions that emerged among age groups centred on social or family pressures of time and money, results that align with the earlier work of both O’Donnell & Tobbell (2007) and Lundberg (2003). Furthermore, the younger cohorts appear

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Barrier Rankings (means with ranking level in parenthesis)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggregated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time away from my family</td>
<td>2.65 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence in my abilities</td>
<td>2.44 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about attending school with younger students</td>
<td>2.17 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of childcare</td>
<td>1.04 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of funds for childcare</td>
<td>1.03 (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to hold non-traditional views regarding in-class power relationships. This group has a strong desire to be seen as equals. Yet paradoxically, this group also willingly accepts it when the instructor teaches to them, in opposition to the desire to participate from the older cohort. These results support the earlier results of Bamber and Tett (2000). However, beyond all of these differences, the most substantial barriers to post-secondary education among all age groups are funding and monetary issues.

**Limitations**

Just as Kimmel and McNeese (2006) acknowledged, we understand that by surveying current students we are, by definition, missing any student who may have had the motivation to return to college for employment training or credential upgrading, but faced barriers that could not be overcome. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the method of distributing surveys through the college email system did not provide the level of response originally hoped for; multiple methods should have been used to engage the students to participate. Despite these limitations, we are hopeful that the results of our work will provide useful insight to faculty and administration within higher education institutions. The demographic range of those sitting in the post-secondary classroom is changing. A better understanding of the motivation and barriers faced by today’s students should help increase the opportunities for successful outcomes.

### References


**Biographies**

William C. Murray is a Ph.D. Candidate (Management) and a faculty member in Hospitality and Tourism Management at NBCC.

Leslie Smith has a M.Ed. and is a faculty member in Hospitality and Tourism Management at NBCC.

Keith Nielson is a student in Hospitality and Tourism Management at NBCC, specializing in Culinary Management.
The ability to write well is often critical for effective work performance. Although basic writing courses provide a foundation for college and university students, discipline-specific writing tasks and methods are frequently learned indirectly. Incorporating occupational writing skills in course curriculum better prepares students for future employment. This paper suggests a three-step process for teaching pertinent writing skills in college and university courses: identify writing skills relevant to post-graduation occupations, include writing in course learning modules, and assess writing skills with assignments that mirror workplace writing tasks. Balancing curricular learning with these workplace needs is an ongoing challenge for instructors.

Employers Seek Effective Writers

Substandard writing skills have been noticed in schools and workplaces across disciplines. Writing courses and writing centre programs can teach students about grammar and composition, and library orientations help students effectively locate source material for papers and projects. However, writing skills, which are often related to specific disciplines or professions, are learned indirectly. Coursework that prepares students for future careers tends to focus on the curriculum content rather than the writing skills students use to present that content. Yet writing ability is often vital for effective work performance, thus demonstrating writing skills that are relevant to future employment is an essential learning outcome for higher education curriculum.

Many employers are alarmed about poor writing skills in new employees and have asked business schools to increase emphasis on writing (Quible & Griffin, 2007). Haberstroh (1994) reported similar concerns in public relations companies, and Alter and Adkins (2001) discovered that up to one-third of graduate social work students had inadequate writing skills yet many did not use available writing assistance programs. These studies made a number of recommendations for higher education, including...
required writing courses, increased assessment of student writing, and consultations with employers that provide examples of desired writing skills (Haberstroh, 1994). Additionally, schools are assessing methods for writing instruction (Quible & Griffin, 2007; Wolff, 1996) and are recommending ways to continue writing instruction after foundational English composition courses (Alter & Adkins, 2006).

These suggestions form the basis for a three-step plan for enhancing writing skills that improve competency in future employment. First, identify the discipline-specific writing skills that are needed in the workplace. Second, develop learning modules that cultivate those writing skills. Third, design course assignments that assess students’ ability to compose documents that are commonly produced in the workplace.

**Identifying Workplace Writing Skills**

Proficient school papers are unlike most writing required in a professional work setting. Academic writing assignments often focus on testing knowledge. They require defining concepts or terms and supporting statements with references to professional literature. In comparison, workplace writing is more likely to describe or analyze situations without openly explaining the knowledge base or citing sources. It assumes that readers are familiar with basic terms and concepts. Workplace writing is usually more about communicating or documenting ideas rather than demonstrating competence (Beaufort, 1998). Therefore, students benefit from seeing examples of writing in their chosen occupations.

While practical writing skills may vary across disciplines, all workplace writing composes a message appropriate for an intended audience (White, 1997). Two aspects often define this writing: types of documents and the writing styles used to create them. Certainly, most employees need to write letters, reports, and descriptions of work tasks. It is also increasingly important to compose professional-sounding email messages rather than informal, rambling notes that often include slang and personal stories. Additional documents used in many occupations include client contacts, action plans, proposals, and evaluations. The profession or place of employment may also influence document formats, content, and organization.

Likewise, workers may use distinctive writing styles to create documents. For example, descriptive writing may be necessary to clearly present data or develop a foundation for a conclusion, while critical analysis is required for evaluating the data or communicating the conclusion. Synthesizing content from a number of sources is a crucial skill in many occupations. Requesting resources and advocating causes employ a persuasive writing style, and reflective writing may help employees to evaluate their own skills and limitations. Style and tone must also be appropriate for the purpose and audience (Polk, 2009; White, 1997). These writing styles are often familiar to students since they may be used in academic assignments. Linking these skills and applying them to employment and professional settings helps students make the transition to the workplace.

In addition, using examples of common workplace writing tasks can provide class and course learning that emphasizes the practical application that most students seek. These examples may come from instructor experiences or be compiled from community input about education needs (see Polk, 2009; Yu, 2010).

**Creating Learning Modules That Include Writing Skills**

Most classes include learning modules that teach specific course content. Writing skills can often be easily added to these modules by providing writing resources, using examples of workplace documents, asking students to write feedback, or designing exercises that demonstrate employment writing skills.

Along these lines, there are a number of helpful resources that students can use to improve writing skills and manuscript organization. Providing locations, phone numbers, or web links to writing centres and library resources communicates an expectation that writing is important and that support is available. Students can also be encouraged to review basic
writing texts or discipline-specific manuals, such as *The Elements of Style* (Strunk & White, 1999), *Writing for Business* (Harvard Business School Press, 2007), *APA Publication Manual* (American Psychological Association, 2010), *MLA Style Manual* (Gibaldi, 2008), or *Scientific Style and Format* (Council of Science Editors, 2006). In addition, there are numerous websites that provide guides, examples, and tutorials about basic writing skills, critical writing, synthesis, objective description, persuasive writing, or letter writing. Links to these websites encourage students to improve writing skills. For example, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides a wide range of writing information and tutorials (Purdue University, 2010).

The following recommendations connect typical workplace writing with classroom learning exercises by introducing students to common documents and feedback reports.

- Use sample documents from workplaces as examples for presenting and organizing content. Ask students to critique poorly written reports.
- Formalize the note-taking that naturally occurs during classroom tasks that use brainstorming, researching, teamwork, role-playing, or self-reflection. This encourages students to consider the role of written logs or minute-taking for reporting and accomplishing work tasks.
- Give points for posting comments on course websites, such as responses to assigned readings, reactions to class discussions, or reflections about learning experiences (Alter & Adkins, 2006). This asks students to write responses similar to the verbal comments in class. It also parallels methods for sharing ideas in many businesses (Yu, 2010).
- Ask invited speakers to mention the role of writing and the writing skills needed for effective job performance.

Finally, some class exercises can focus directly on the writing tasks required in future occupations by presenting a scenario and directing students to write a brief analysis, reply, evaluation, or response. These papers can form the basis of small group discussion, be part of a series of exercises, or provide a foundation for course assignments. The following suggestions can improve the effectiveness of these exercises.

- Focus on a specific or narrow topic that can be addressed in a short answer.
- Introduce a prewriting exercise (Baker, 2005) that asks students to create three columns by drawing two vertical lines on a page. List information (e.g., who, what, where, how, when, and why) that needs communicating in the first column with no concern for wording or order. Examine these items and identify categories of information in the second column. Draw lines from the first column items to the second column categories. Use the third column to organize the categories.
- Include guides for effective writing in the exercise instructions. For example, present the OABC (opening, agenda, body, closing) framework (Baker, 2005) or ask students to start with a clearly stated thesis or purpose, organize the content by presenting the ideas that support or develop the thesis, and end with a conclusion or recommendation that restates the thesis (Northey & McKibbin, 2009).
- Encourage students to write rough drafts, acknowledging the need for editing to create an acceptable final document. Present a draft paragraph in class and ask students for editing suggestions.
- Give students five minutes to discuss ideas for the paper in small groups before they begin writing. This can sometimes minimize “writer’s block.”
- Require each student to write something rather than ask a small group to write together. This challenges each student to practice writing skills.
- Team writing can be modeled by asking students to synthesize the individual writing
pieces. These can be posted on a course website, become a rough draft for a subsequent assignment, or be submitted as a course assignment.

Assignments that Mirror Workplace Writing

Learning experiences that include writing skills prepare students for effectively composing papers that demonstrate course knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Students often focus only on content, and they may be confused when poorly written papers result in a lower grade. Moreover, assignments that parallel work tasks connect course content and career development, which is a preferred learning outcome for most program curriculums. The natural outcome of teaching students about applicable workplace writing skills is to assess those skills in written assignments similar to work documents. The following examples can test student writing abilities.

• Letters to the editor, responses to a publication, or product complaints ask students to analyze, synthesize knowledge, persuade, and effectively communicate through writing (Polk, 2009). Choose source material that illustrates course content.

• Composing client contact notes or task progress notes evaluates knowledge of work process, integration of knowledge and skill, and ability to clearly and concisely present information.

• Action plans, such as needs assessments or program development, require research, synthesis of ideas, application to authentic work situations, and comparison of alternative approaches.

• Students can be asked to prepare research reports, justify requests for funding or resources, or evaluate effectiveness.

• They can produce a written product individually or in a team. Written assignments may take the form of brief responses, multi-section reports, poster presentations, multimedia presentations, or verbal presentations assisted by engaging handouts.

• Require students to use writing styles, manuscript organization, citation, and reference formats appropriate to the profession (Muller, 2010; Northey & McKibbin, 2009).

• Promote learning by discussing student progress with assignments, giving formative feedback, and asking students to develop a portfolio to illustrate ongoing learning (Yú, 2010).

From my own experience of using these techniques, I have asked my social work students to write a letter to the editor responding to a newspaper story about poverty reduction. Many found it challenging to use a persuasive writing style that asked the reader to perform or support some action. Another assignment required students to compose a note that described an initial interview with a client that they observed on video. They often struggled with instructions that told them to first describe what they see and hear. However, separating empirical observation from interpretation is an essential practice skill, and distinguishing descriptive and analytical writing styles helps students learn this. This type of assignment also compels students to recognize the development of their professional competence. In the workplace these notes ask the employee to communicate observations and assess a specific person or event rather than compose a summary of literature reports. My social work students are also asked to develop a research proposal that would address a real-life situation in their assigned field internship. They must produce a literature review that supports the action that they propose and create an implementable action plan. They also create a poster that they present in a public forum. This requires students to summarize the most important aspects of their proposal, clearly and concisely communicating these ideas, and presenting content in an engaging and persuasive manner to the public.

Student Reactions

Student feedback indicated a number of benefits
from the writing content in my courses. They reported that writing exercises challenged them to clarify thinking and recognize writing organization and formatting appropriate for their discipline. The writing exercises also helped them improve written assignments in other courses and prepared them for writing requirements during internships or employment. Writing descriptive case notes helped them reduce biased statements, and developing clearly stated thesis statements improved the logical organization of case notes and research reports. Many tended to characterize writing as a utilitarian chore or school requirement and had not considered the implications of writing as a career skill.

Competent writing skills are an essential learning outcome of college and university curriculum. Both basic writing mechanics and compositional styles used in discipline-specific occupations are necessary for effective job performance. Students’ chances of successful transition to post graduation careers increase when courses identify written documents and writing styles used in their discipline along with the inclusion of writing skills in course learning modules.

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**Biography**

James P. Coyle is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Windsor. His research interests include resilience in families, youth, and communities, and the efficacy of specialized writing skills as a learning outcome in university curriculum.