The Importance of Reflection in Effective Teaching

Corey S. Mackenzie, Psychology

When I was growing up as the son of an elementary school principal, I was often asked if I would follow in my father’s footsteps and become a teacher. My father was, after all, a well-respected and highly effective teacher and school administrator. Initially, my knee-jerk reaction was to say no. As an independent young lad I was determined to follow my own path, wherever that took me. It is with some amusement, therefore, that my path has taken me to the front of classrooms, to mentoring and teaching students in my Mental Health and Aging laboratory, and to supervising clinical psychology students as they learn to work with clients who are suffering from physical and mental health problems. My father also finds this amusing!

In much the same way that I have often reflected on my path to a career in research and teaching, I think it is incredibly important and necessary to reflect on the qualities that are necessary for effective teaching. Such reflections form the basis of teaching philosophies that are required parts of teaching dossiers, but more importantly they help us become better teachers. My own teaching philosophy includes the importance of developing effective relationships with my students, being myself while teaching, being clear with students about my expectations, incorporating what science tells us about how we learn best, and providing ample opportunities for constructive feedback on how well information is being learned. Perhaps most importantly, however, my philosophy emphasizes the need to be thoughtful about my teaching and about ways of inspiring students to learn. Reflecting on aspects of teaching that have worked well.

(Continued on page 2)
is important – and easy to do. It is both easy and rewarding to think about what a great teacher you are as you leave a classroom after a particularly strong lecture, or as you have an exciting and productive meeting with a graduate student. It is both much more important and much less easy to reflect on teaching failures and to learn from them. Like most people, I feel a strong desire to quickly forget mistakes and mis-steps I have made while teaching, to distract myself from awful lectures, and to make excuses for poorly handled mentoring or supervisory situations. Doing so, however, removes wonderful learning opportunities and I have learned as much, if not more, about teaching from the mistakes I’ve made than from my successes. By way of example, I will share an experience from the first graduate course I taught on theories of psychotherapy.

On the heels of my first academic appointment I was full of energy and excitement, and seriously lacking in teaching skills and experience. I therefore spoke to mentors for advice and charged ahead in creating lectures for this course. The first class went fabulously well and I was convinced that I was a “natural”, that my father’s years of teaching experience and expertise had somehow transferred to me through the miracle of genetics. This was going to be easy, I told myself, the students love me and they are going to love this class. Life was good … until the second class that is. I had an out-of-body experience during that second lecture as I saw myself firing important information at these poor students at break-neck speed, as I saw their eyes glossing over half way through the lecture, as I saw myself losing them as I piled more and more information on, as I saw myself plowing forward and unable or unwilling to stop. As the lecture ended I was struck by the harsh realization that teaching wasn’t going to be easy at all, and that I wasn’t a “natural”. What was I going to do with this realization – push it aside and attribute it to an off day, or to the stress I was feeling in my new job, or to students who weren’t up to the task of absorbing all of this difficult material – or sit down and take a close, hard look at what happened, to learn from it, to grow from it? That question lies at the heart of reflective teaching for each and every one of who does this for a living.

Although I am reflective by nature, reflecting on personal experiences is also a skill that I have learned through my training in clinical psychology. The very best therapists are those who have this skill – the ability to look into places and situations where many of us would rather not look. In clinical psychology training programs, the primary method for helping therapists-in-training to become reflective is to have them engage in therapy and then to meet with a clinical supervisor to discuss how they did. Clinical psychology students typically have many hours of supervision each week where they watch videotape of themselves doing therapy and discuss their clients and their work as therapists. Supervision is reflection. It is spending time thinking about your clients and thinking about how you are doing as a therapist to help your clients learn how to grow and to cope more effectively. Imagine for a moment if we applied this model to teaching, so that following each lecture you would meet with a mentor who would spend time talking to you about how you did and how you might do better next time. Although that model isn’t entirely feasible in university settings because of the multiple demands we face, each of us can engage in this process to some degree. For example, following a lecture do you quickly file your notes and slides away until the next time you teach that lecture, or do you take some time to add to or modify them, giving consideration to how that lecture might be improved next time? How about when you receive your course evaluations – do you read them and look for ways of making changes to your teaching based on suggestions and criticism you’ll almost certainly read, if you take the time to do so?

Reflective teaching requires more time and effort on your part, but the potential rewards are well worth it in my view. Engaging in this process keeps your teaching fresh and alive, for each new teaching experience brings with it challenges, rewards, and opportunities for growth and improvement. Whether you take advantage of those opportunities is up to you.
Reflection is an integral part of our human existence. It begins in infancy when we see ourselves as reflections in a mirror. We engage in an action or an expression and the image replicates our actions. Reflections on our image and actions are pleasant and engaging. As we age and become more cognitively, psychologically and socially aware, we become engaged by the reflections of ourselves in the “mirrors” which are not only ourselves but includes our friends, colleagues and students. This feedback is not always pleasing. When the feedback is positive, we rejoice in our successes, but when the feedback is less favourable it may be easier to deny, avoid or repress those “reflections” of ourselves. Perhaps on braver days we may adopt a self-reflective practice, working to improve those areas in need of renovation.

In Corey’s article (pg. 1) he shares his journey of accepting his “destiny” as teacher and how he uses reflective practice to develop his teaching expertise. On page 4 you will find a poetic expression of Yi Li’s self-reflective emotions on her first year of teaching at the University of Manitoba. We also share an expression of innovation due to the reflection and critical thinking of Penny who was focussed on providing excellent learning opportunities for all students (pg. 10). Sometimes reflective practice brings to light our lack of knowledge about a particular pedagogical practice or teaching challenge. Hopefully, the article on teaching students with ADD/ADHD (pg. 18) and the book review on integrating diversity into the curriculum (pg. 19) will trigger an idea for enriching your teaching. Reflective practice nurtures professional and individual growth and when done well, persists throughout the lifetime as exemplified through Michael Ruse’s reflections about being a professor at age 70 (pg. 12).

Reflection as a meta-cognitive activity is easier to embrace for our students than ourselves. We assign reflective journals, we say things like: “the student lacks self-awareness” or “if s/he had only thought about it first”. Rae (pg. 16) describes how the students’ learning was enhanced not only from their reflective journaling but also from her reflective responses. Raymond encourages us to reflect on not just our verbal and written communication with students but also on our emotional communication which students value highly in their academic experience (pg. 14).

UTS encourages reflective practice and hosts an annual event – Student Teacher Recognition Reception (STRR) – when students reflect on the positive impacts teachers have made on their lives and educational journey. It is an uplifting and motivating event that will be webcast live on Thursday, May 6, 2010 through the UTS website (see link on pg. 9).

And for those of us learning to teach...

*By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.* (Confucius)
I moved from Edmonton, Alberta in June 2008 to begin my new position as an Assistant Professor in the area of Teaching English as an additional language at the Faculty of Education. I was really excited and nervous at the same time. Prior to immigrating to Canada in 1998, I had taught English as a Foreign Language at Tong Ji University in Shanghai, China for almost 10 years. There were prescribed English textbooks for me to use in all the courses that I taught. The students would come to my classes, listen to the lectures and write a mid-term and a final exam with multiple choice questions. During my doctoral studies (2001-2005) at the University of Alberta, I taught an English as a Second Language methods course to third and fourth year students in a four-year B. Ed. program in the fall of 2002 and 2003. Meanwhile, in order to learn how to teach in a Canadian university classroom, a very foreign territory to me at that time, I officially enrolled in the University Teaching Program offered through the University Teaching Services at the University of Alberta. Because of these experiences, I learned to overcome my feelings of inadequacy as a foreigner teaching Canadian undergraduate students. I learned how things got done in that new academic setting. I learned how to use marking rubrics to assess and evaluate assignments as I said goodbye to multiple-choice-question exams.

The Journey of my First Year Teaching: Three Narrative Moments

In the following section I will present three storied moments which depict my journey of first year teaching at the University of Manitoba.

**September 2008 - Storied moment 1: Teaching my first class in a new place**

**Nervous**
I wrote my course outline tentatively in August
Planning the nine weeks of classes ahead
Before I met my teacher candidates
Before I had a sense of who they were

**Panicked**
On September 3 when I received another list
Of 11 students from Extended Education
I had planned all my classes for 25 students only
They were all pre-service teacher candidates

**Recovered**
After taking many deep breaths
I immediately booked two extra classrooms
And reserved two extra digital camcorders
To include these 11 C-TESL students

**Gloomy**
The classroom was a rectangle
With an undone ceiling
I was afraid to look up
at the ugly grey concrete above
Hopeful
I rearranged the desks and chairs for group work
I imagined all my students would come
And fill this empty space with life and energy
To transform it into a meaningful learning place

Excited
I began my first class on September 9
By reading children’s literature *The Name Jar*
I invited my students to share their name stories
So that we got to know a little about one another

Amazed
Six students were recent immigrants to Manitoba
They wanted to become teachers
To help newcomer children and adults learn
And to live a good life in Canada

Challenged
How am I going to help all these 36 students
Who are at various stages of their teacher development
To think about how to teach EAL students
To think about who she/he is as an educator

Frustrated
When several students asked me questions
About the course assignments again and again
They were expecting me to tell them what to do
As there were no right answers for them to come to

Confident
The students would learn so much from their own stories
Of learning or teaching a second language
By writing the stories, sharing the stories
And wondering together about their meanings

Anxious
When I was locked outside the entrance door
I couldn’t go back to my office
To get my course materials for my next class
I didn’t know I needed an access card!!!

Thus began my journey of first year teaching at the University of Manitoba almost two years ago. I still remember the anxiety I felt at that moment. I circled around the whole Education building frantically, trying to open every door that I could find, but in vain. Fortunately, one of my colleagues happened to be walking back to his office. He also had an evening class. So he swiped his staff card to let me in. Since that evening, I have always carried my staff card with me!

Although I had spent the months of July and August working in my office every day, learning most of the names of the support staff during coffee breaks and lunchtime and trying to figure out how this new place worked, there were still many surprises along the way. I have learned to be very patient with myself and others!

Nine weeks flew by and I found myself sitting in my office and feeling exhausted after my last class on November 6, 2008.
November 2008 - Storied Moment 2: I Forgot to Stop and Breathe!

**Shocked**
My students were taking five courses  
And several of them were doing seven  
They asked me to extend the due date  
Of the first assignment around mid-term

**Sleepless**
I thought hard about their request  
They were all stressed out  
They had so much on their plate  
I moved the deadline later

**Pleased**
My students enjoyed the 1-on-1 teaching  
They made a lesson plan  
And carried it out  
They were learning to think like a teacher

**Disastrous**
The first video-taped peer-teaching didn’t go well  
It took them longer to set up the equipment  
They were very nervous in front of the camera  
They felt rushed to finish six 10-minute lessons

**Determined**
I took full responsibility for what had happened  
I had learned my lessons, I told them  
They would feel and do much better  
The second time around, and they did!

**Agonized**
Every time I assign a grade to a student’s work  
I am judging them, not helping them to learn  
I use a pencil to write my response and grade  
They can come to me if they disagree, I tell them

**Disappointed**
Several students didn’t show up for our last class  
It was hailing and the roads were very slippery  
They emailed to let me know  
I couldn’t understand the reason behind

**Exhausted**
I worked at least 12 hours a day, seven days a week  
During those nine weeks of intensive teaching  
Always planning, preparing and marking  
I forgot to stop and breathe

Looking back, I still remember my sense of relief after that last class. I wonder now if my teacher candidates felt the same way. More than half of students in that class were transitioning into the Faculty of Education from other disciplines. They were moving from being a student to becoming a teacher. It is no wonder then that they were confused and anxious and that they had so many questions about my assignments. They wanted me to tell them what to do so that they could get the right answers. They were used to having the teachers deliver the curriculum to them.

I was really puzzled when several students didn’t show up for our last class. At the time, I didn’t understand why bad weather would prevent them from coming to class. It almost sounded like “my dog ate my homework” type of excuse. It never happened when I was teaching in Shanghai or Edmonton. After living through my first winter in Winnipeg, I now understand how dangerous it is to drive on those wintry and slippery Manitoba roads in a snow
storm. I didn’t know at that time that several students actually lived in small towns outside Winnipeg and had to drive on the highway for 20 – 30 minutes in order to come to my class. I learned not to take it too personally when my students missed a class or two because of bad weather!

I worked really hard during the Christmas break, revising my course outline, assignments and marking rubrics. I had a better idea about how to structure this course so as to help my teacher candidates think about some of the basic issues in second language teaching and how their understanding of these issues might shape their future teaching practices with EAL students in their classrooms. I felt excited when the winter term began on January 6, 2009. I went to my classroom and was pleasantly surprised. It was a much bigger, brighter and better-decorated place! I had 24 students in the course and I met them in the evening over a period of 13 weeks for three hours each week. Even though I still felt exhausted at the end of my teaching, I was much happier about how this course was coming along. I wondered what stories the students were telling about my courses. I wondered how I was being storied on this new landscape.

April 2009 - Storied Moment 3: Teaching the course in a more narrative way

Becoming a teacher Writing, reading and responding to stories
Is always a work-in-progress They learn to listen attentively
I read the story of ISH They begin to value their own experiences
Inviting my course participants They come to understand others in a deeper way
To think about the importance of ish-ness They feel closer to one another in this community

Telling my own name stories Feeling anxious about the first peer-teaching
Li Yi, Lisa and Yi Li They are out of their comfort zone
What each name means to me Some have never taught adults before
I ask about the stories of their names Others seldom stand in front of a camcorder
We get to know one another better You will all be surprised, I tell them

Role-playing an interview Showing a 10-minute lesson of German and Japanese
Between an EAL student and a teacher We discuss different aspects of effective teaching
How do you feel as the teacher We talk about the marking rubric
How do you feel as the student They feel more confident about their own ideas
What could you have done to communicate knowing they can do that as well

(Continued from page 6)
Participating in the two micro-teaching events
They learn colors in ASL, Hebrew and Mandarin
count numbers in Spanish, Tagalog and Greek
and say greetings in Italian, Ukrainian and French
They realize what it takes to learn an additional language

Encouraging them to take ownership of their learning
I ask them to self assess their class participation
At the end of our each class session
What they learn from reading the chapters
What class activities help them think differently

Sitting in a big circle
I invite them to share their learning
They each take turns to talk about
What they write in their final paper
The most important that they have learned

Becoming a teacher
Is a lifelong journey
I hope they realize its complexity
I hope they trust what they do know
And learn to live with what they don’t yet

Looking back, I was really pleased when several students mentioned how teaching EAL students was much more complex than they had first thought. They enjoyed many of the course activities because they had learned more about themselves as language learners, and as teachers or teachers-to-be. Many of them said that they felt more confident and comfortable in teaching EAL students in their future classrooms.

Looking ahead

As I look back on my teaching practices across the three different contexts, I realize that I have moved away from being a sage on the stage and teaching a body of knowledge to teacher candidates to becoming a facilitator and helping them to think hard and be able to recognize what they do know and what are some gaps for them as they embark on this complex journey of becoming a teacher. I realize that the teacher candidates in the first term and second term courses are quite different in terms of their development as teachers. I need to think about what might be difficult and what needs clarification for each group so that I can structure the course experiences better to help them learn. I also realize the importance of making a space in my classroom to wonder and puzzle together about issues that are important in their lives as teachers. I am really looking forward to my second year of teaching!
The **Students’ Teacher Recognition Reception** gives outstanding graduating students an opportunity to honour teachers who have made important contributions to their education. Recognizing that academic growth and development occurs over many years, the outstanding students are asked to recognize two teachers: one from their Kindergarten to Grade 12 years and one from their years at The University of Manitoba. During the awards ceremony, the students each come forward to speak about the contribution their honoured teachers have made to their education.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>U of M Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>K-12 Teacher</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural &amp; Food Sciences</td>
<td>Sue Arntfield</td>
<td>Marcia McFadden</td>
<td>Bruce Willows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Liane Veness</td>
<td>Claire Fontaine</td>
<td>Frances Dockerill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Elizabeth Comack</td>
<td>Evan Bowness</td>
<td>Derek Sims</td>
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<td>Asper School of Business</td>
<td>Reg Litz</td>
<td>Matthew Ullenboom</td>
<td>Tom Crew</td>
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<td>Clayton H. Riddell, Environment, Earth &amp; Resources</td>
<td>James Hare</td>
<td>Sophia Lavergne</td>
<td>Paul Marcoux</td>
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<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>John Perry</td>
<td>Danielle Rainnie</td>
<td>Darren Oughton</td>
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<td>Dental Hygiene</td>
<td>Salme Lavigne</td>
<td>Kyle Conrad</td>
<td>Neal Van De Spiegle</td>
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<td>Brian Lewthwaite</td>
<td>Jesse Hofer</td>
<td>Zacharias Hofer</td>
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<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Jason Morrison</td>
<td>Tyler Grant</td>
<td>Shea Bollegraf</td>
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<td>Christina Lengyel</td>
<td>Kelly Fehr</td>
<td>Raffaele Borelli</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinesiology &amp; Recreation Management</td>
<td>Joannie Halas</td>
<td>Aaron Boila</td>
<td>Emile Wallack</td>
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<td>Law</td>
<td>Gerald Heckman</td>
<td>Jason Roberts</td>
<td>Nick Fergus</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>Allen Harrington</td>
<td>Alena Arnason</td>
<td>Darrin Oehlerking</td>
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<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Sara Shuster</td>
<td>Erin Barclay</td>
<td>John Muller</td>
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<td>Kristine Petrasko</td>
<td>Yang Xu</td>
<td>Bruce Dryburgh</td>
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<td>Gordon Reeve</td>
<td>Laura Magnusson</td>
<td>Deb Scott</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Gábor Lukács</td>
<td>Trevor Rempel</td>
<td>Ted Jeninga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Kathy Jones</td>
<td>Vanessa Patola</td>
<td>Becky Krawchuk</td>
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To view this year’s live webcast please visit: [rtsp://media.cc.umanitoba.ca/broadcast/webcast.rm](rtsp://media.cc.umanitoba.ca/broadcast/webcast.rm)
As the student population grew to over 1,100 undergraduate students by the late 1990’s, Penny Davis, (former) Coordinator of the Four Year Nursing Degree Program at the Faculty of Nursing (FON), recognized the need for specific nursing-focused English language support. They identified that many students did not have sufficient oral or written communication skills and were struggling to meet the demands of our professional nursing program. The College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM) entry level competencies for registered nurses are predicated on the understanding that registered nurses can communicate effectively by employing a range of communication skills with clients, families, and health care professionals. In particular, “The nurse-patient relationship is built on communication; the most important tool of the nurse is the effective use of language” (Gutterman, 2004, p. 264). Penny saw that it was incumbent upon nurse educators to ensure that Nursing graduates have the necessary language and communication skills to meet the standards established by the profession’s regulating body, the CRNM. Thus, in an effort to minimize student attrition and maximize the students’ opportunities for success both in the program and in the profession, a group of faculty led by Penny Davis proposed a demonstration project in the spring of 2000. This project which was supported by the Nursing Endowment Fund, allowed Penny to hire a Communications Instructor (CI) for 10 hours per week. The CI’s efforts had a significant impact by: improving the quality of writing in student nurses’ assignments, particularly in the first and second year courses, and increasing the rate at which students’ communication difficulties were assessed and addressed, especially within the students’ first and second clinical rotations. Within six years, the CI role became a full-time Instructor level position within the FON. In this paper, the responsibilities and benefits of this innovative role in nursing education will be explained by the present CI in honour of Penny Davis, whose leadership was integral in creating this unique and valuable position within the FON.

The Communication Instructor Position: New Realities in Nursing Education

The qualifications of the current Communications Instructor includes a Masters degree in education, with experience in teaching oral and written communication including extensive cultural diversity and numerous English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners. This skill set is integral in nursing because never in the history of the FON has there ever been as many nursing students as there are now (the FON has admitted in excess of 300 new students each fall in recent years), nor has there ever been the range of diversity as there is in the present student nurse population. Consequently, the CI provides full-time service to the Four-Year Baccalaureate Nursing Program, the Baccalaureate Program for Registered Nurses (BPRN), and the Master of Nursing program, and reports to the Dean and administrators in each area. The majority of the CIs time is spent assisting students with written communication specific to the nursing assignments and clinical tasks: on a one-to-one basis, through presentations within the various FON
courses, and via web resources [http://umanitoba.ca/ faculties/nursing/studentarea/110.htm]. Assistance is available for the varying stages of a nursing assignment or thesis including outlining, (re)drafting, editing, and synthesis of nursing research literature. Moreover, the Communications Instructor teaches diction, style, tone, and other academic writing conventions, such as grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation using nursing examples and medical terminology. Moreover, the CI routinely provides presentations on the use of the American Psychological Association’s (APA) Referencing Style, including citation, referencing, and formatting, as expected in FON assignments and nursing publications. The CI has an average of 200 thirty to sixty minute student appointments per term, and faculty, who are excellent writers but often do not have the specific expertise to explain to students how their writing can be improved, have more time to focus on teaching, research, and service responsibilities in the FON.

To address oral and interpersonal communication on clinical practice rotations, clinical nurse educators refer individual nursing students for one-to-one consultation, workshops, or orientations on topics such as giving report on a patient’s condition to other nurses, or interacting with patients during care. By collaborating directly with nurse educators and their students in the clinical areas, the CI can provide specialized nursing support on communication before the students’ next patient interaction or clinical performance evaluation. In this capacity, the CI actively collaborates with other services on campus, such as the English Language Centre, the Learning Assistance Centre, Disability Services, the International Centre, Student Advocacy, University 1, and Counseling and Career Services, to give nursing students every opportunity to succeed.

In recent years, the CI has led or co-led a three credit hour undergraduate Nursing course, “Providing Care in a Culturally Diverse Society” as the FON has established the priority of teaching student nurses to care for culturally diverse patient populations in urban and rural communities in Manitoba (FON website, 2010). Hence, the students learn to communicate effectively with patients and their families despite differences in language and expectations due to cultural aspects of health and health care. Additionally, the CI collaborates with faculty members to engage nursing students in public speaking and publishing projects based on their intercultural experiences.

The CI also interacts directly with Nursing faculty by providing workshops to nurse educators on teaching strategies to address nursing communication, particularly with students who speak English as an Additional Language. The CI participates in committee work in the FON and attends Nursing Faculty Council. Thus, nurse educators have a resource on providing constructive feedback to students, and the CI is familiar with the specific nursing expectations and standards set by the FON.

Thank you Penny

The CI position became possible due to the leadership and vision of Penny Davis. As the Coordinator of the Four Year Degree Program in Nursing, Penny set the conditions for the success of the CI position. Penny provided practical straightforward guidance to the CI, and monitored the progress and well-being of the CI as the demands for assistance became greater and greater. In creating the CI position in the FON, Penny leaves a legacy of assistance to students who wish to be nurses but need to improve their communication skills in the process.

References


I recently came across a blog entry in the Chronicle Review’s “Brainstorm” Blog that I thought might be of interest to some of our U of M Faculty. The Brainstorm Blog discusses “ideas, culture, the arts and features some of the best minds in academic and policy circles”. The Blog posting which caught my eye is called “A Prof at 70: Having Fun, Feeling Guilty” by Michael Ruse and can be accessed at:

http://chronicle.com/blogPost/A-Prof-at-70-Having-Fun/22460/

Enjoy!

Eunice Friesen
University Teaching Services

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Emotional Communications with Students: Challenges and Opportunities

A great deal of emphasis and resources are placed on incorporating the latest technologies to enhance the communication of knowledge in university teaching. In spite of (or perhaps because of) such technological advances, the emotional bond with our students has waned. A recent survey of undergraduates at Canadian universities indicated that students value instructors as role models and mentors, as face-to-face communications were ranked highly with regard to their importance in the learning experience (University of Manitoba Student Affairs Research Report, November 2009, Vol. 21, No. 2).

The challenge for academics has always been to establish a connection with students to motivate learning and engagement with the course materials. As part of a larger study on the teaching experiences and outcomes of academic staff at U of M, we conducted focus group interviews with professors from several disciplines on how they used emotions during formal instruction.

Our findings were revealing. The participants suggested that emotional communications were more than just showing confidence and enthusiasm during lectures. It also meant being attentive and responsive to the needs of students to facilitate learning. One professor indicated that she expressed through verbal and nonverbal communications a variety of emotions to encourage involvement. She frequently shared personal anecdotes, ranging from light humor to sadness, to generate interest. A major challenge for her was how to discourage students who dominated the class discussion without putting them down, yet at the same time, getting others to participate more actively.

Providing face-to-face constructive feedback to under-performing students was awkward and often emotionally-charged. Another professor suggested that differences in student expectations affect how feedback should be provided. For example, students in Australia are more accepting of sardonic and sarcastic remarks, whereas students in Canada are more sensitive to blunt remarks made during class or harsh criticisms of their ideas. There are cross-cultural variations in how students perceived body language and contextual cues that signaled the “appropriate” ways to interact. Further, emotional communications were all the more challenging when the professor and student are of the opposite gender.

A professor of medicine found that the expression of negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, were more acceptable among students in Europe than those in North America. Consciously withholding anger, disappointment and even sympathy were not just meant to avoid embarrassment, but served to motivate students. He deliberately gave more “face time” to students who showed initiative and were
making progress in their assignments. This was not only a positive reinforcement for them, but also served as an example for the rest of the students.

Expressing and withholding emotions is one side of the coin. The flip side is being able to “read” and respond appropriately to the students’ feelings, especially those from different cultures. Students from high-context cultures are generally unwilling to verbalize negative feelings to their instructors, who are seen as distant authority figures, and for fear of “losing face.” Through interpretation of their non-verbal cues and behaviors, emotional engagement is possible. I (Raymond Lee) experienced this situation recently with an international undergraduate student at U of M. He had done well in the midterm exam and other assignments, but near the end of the term, missed classes and an assignment deadline. During and after the writing of the final exam, I perceived that he was in a highly agitated state, and I asked him if everything was alright. The student nervously shook his head, but was reluctant to elaborate any further, even when we were alone outside the exam hall. After several attempts at encouraging him to open up, I realized that he was embarrassed to express his personal issue and feelings around it. The breakthrough came when I spoke to him in his native tongue of Mandarin to establish some degree of rapport and trust. My attempt at emotional communications seemed to be the appropriate response and re-motivated him to complete the course assignment, which ultimately helped to resolve his personal issue.

Our research on emotional communications has implications for teaching and the enhancement of student learning. First, emotional and cross-cultural sensitivity training should be integrated into graduate training curricula. In recent years, UTS has offered a range of workshops to graduate students and instructors on various emotionally-laden situations, such as, “The Disruptive Student,” “Alleviating Anxiety of University Students,” and “Intercultural Communication.” Second, to supplement these workshops, role-playing exercises and case-example discussions may be used to anticipate, practice, and receive peer feedback on how to use emotional communications more effectively. Third, experienced instructors may be encouraged and invited to serve as resource guides and mentors for graduate students and new academics within their faculty/school. Through teaching workshops and informal “brown-bag” sessions, their “war stories” may be shared and used to help develop strategies and heuristics for managing thorny situations. This reflective practice should foster dialogue and initiate action to make emotional communications an integral and rewarding educational experience for instructors and students alike.
Reflective Journaling:
An anecdotal description of developing meta-cognition in a theory course focusing on practice-based skills

Rae Harwood
Nursing

During the Winter 2010 term, I had the privilege of teaching an elective course in counselling skills for nurses. The majority of the 14 students were nurses who were completing their baccalaureate degree, most of whom were employed either full-time or part-time in nursing.

What was the assignment?
One of the course assignments was for each student to submit, via email, a 1-2 page reflection to me (the instructor) each week. The guidelines were very basic. Students were asked to reflect upon one of the following themes:
1. something from the class presentation/discussions, or
2. something from the required reading (either the textbook or the suggested articles), or
3. some other aspect of learning from the workplace which related to the topics covered in class.

Students sent their reflections to me by 4:00 p.m. each Friday (classes were on Wednesday evenings), and I commented on the reflections and emailed them back to the students prior to the next class.

What does the literature say?
The use of reflective journaling has been gaining support in many disciplines as a means of fostering professional preparation. Langley and Brown (2010) suggest that this process happens when students are enabled to create linkages between their sense of personhood and the expectations of the professional role. It is seen as a valuable contributor to the confidence of students in their ability to learn critical thinking. Dunlap (2006) has identified journal writing as a strategy which promotes the understanding of concepts by students, as well as a tool which can improve critical thinking. More specifically, it can help to capture changes in the students’ insight and understanding of the material presented. This can help promote greater self-efficacy. Langley and Brown (2010) have identified that the primary rationale for the use of reflective journals is grounded in general, adult, and experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984). In addition to professional development, the literature recognizes that reflective journaling can contribute significantly to the students’ personal growth, empowerment, and to the facilitation of the learning process (Langley & Brown, 2010).

What were the impacts on student learning?
What was seen in the weekly reflections submitted by the students in the counselling skills course was not only growth in the understanding of the topics being taught but also in the process of how to reflect effectively. Some students began this process by submitting a summary of the key concepts of the topic of the week, with little or no reflection.
Through my comments which provided direction and further “questions to ponder”, these students began to demonstrate greater skill in reflection, and with it, increased depth of dialogue about the topic. At the end of the course, students were given the option to submit either a mega-reflection or a meta-reflection. The mega-reflection required the students to review the previous 12 submissions, and reflect upon their growth and development throughout this course. Students indicated that they were amazed at how much they had grown in their understanding and application of the various counselling skills. Their nursing practice was now different from what it had been prior to taking this course. The meta-reflection required students to “reflect on reflection”. The students who chose to complete the meta-reflection indicated that they now had a clearer understanding about the process of reflection and how it benefitted their learning. Most students (regardless of which final submission they made) stated they would like to continue to do reflective journaling.

**What were the challenges to using reflective journaling?**

When students submit a reflective journal to an instructor, there are several potential barriers to this process. Langley & Brown (2010) suggest that the most significant barriers for the student are lack of time, fear (usually related to lack of trust and self-disclosure concerns), grading issues, and fear of jeopardizing academics. Some of these barriers were expressed by some students in my course as well. I would suggest that these barriers exist for the educator also. It took considerable time to read the reflections each week and to thoughtfully respond to each student. There was an element of fear involved because of the nature of the course material – what if students chose to self-disclose highly personal and sensitive material? How can this type of assignment be fairly graded? This last question was handled rather simply – as long as the submission was “reflective” and “on time”, the student received the full mark for that week. If the assignment was late or non-reflective, the standard 10% deduction was applied. The reflective assignments were worth 20% of their final grade.

**Would I do this again?**

Absolutely! I grew to know my students as individuals, and this helped me tailor some of the in-class learning activities as well. The responses from the students indicating their personal growth, their increased critical thinking, their increased confidence in their practice and their deeper understanding of the course content supported the use of reflective journaling as an instructional strategy promoting deeper learning.

**References**


Students diagnosed with ADD (attention deficit disorder) and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) face certain hurdles when attending University. Some—through early diagnosis, aware and active parenting and/or an accommodating and supportive high-school experience—fare better than others because they have come to understand their diagnosis and how best to deal with the unique challenges associated with it. Others struggle, however, as instructors try and come to terms with these students that seem to learn at a different pace, that often appear disruptive or unable to grasp lessons taught in a standard fashion. An important point to realize is that these students are not less intelligent, but simply learn and process information in a different way. With that in mind, there are many teaching strategies university professors can employ for students with ADD/ADHD that engage them in the learning experience while seeking to explore the strengths each student possesses.

Studies show that people process information more effectively, whether they are diagnosed with ADD/ADHD or not, when it is presented in a clear framework, when it is broken into parts, and when these parts are clearly related to each other. Many techniques often recommended for teaching students with ADD/ADHD will be helpful even if you do not have a single formally diagnosed student in your course. Making your expectations explicit, highlighting the most important information in the course and varying your presentation will benefit all of your students.

Here are some of the many ways an instructor can adapt the presentation of a lesson:

- give a structured overview before the lesson
- use visual aids such as overhead projector; provide overhead notes for students
- colour coding overhead notes and hand-outs to add emphasis
- providing notes in advance to allow students to listen to lecture
- allow students to record lectures presented verbally
- collaborative planning with TA’s to pre-teach concepts and key issues involved in upcoming lessons
- include a variety of techniques in presenting lessons such as overhead, lecture, presentations, group work, take-home assignments/tests, demonstrations.

To further assist students, instructors can break large assignments in smaller components, providing feedback and reinforcement as each part is completed. In addition, instead of a schedule of mid-term, essay, essay and final, instructors can include take-home exams, group-work, presentations and other work to grade students that may struggle in a more standard grading scheme.

Allowing flexibility in lesson preparation and delivery gives all students a level playing field and allows the student with ADD/ADHD to prosper academically. While the number of students with this diagnosis will still be relatively low in each classroom, using a variety of strategies can help all students learn better.

References:

According to Cohn and Mullenix (2007), diversity is inescapable in our world and an intrinsic part of the human experience.

Given the truth of this statement, it only makes sense that institutions of higher learning are finding it essential to address the needs and concerns of our diverse student communities. In the world of Higher Education, the concepts of diversity and global community are often woven throughout the areas of teaching, research, and service, sometimes not in a practical way, but simply with a superficial acknowledgement. It would be helpful to take into consideration the diverse and international demographic presence at our respective post-secondary institutions as we design curricula and develop the course content.

This book has been divided into five succinct categories:
1. The introduction which explores the importance of diversity
2. Challenges
3. Practice of diversity
4. Examples of diversity initiatives at various institutions
5. Implementation of diversity into curricula in the Humanities, the Health Sciences, and the Natural and Social Sciences disciplines.

The various institutions and disciplines highlighted by Branche et al. (2007) suggest that the practice of implementing diversity begins with self-awareness, followed by the support of a faculty advocate who will champion and pioneer the efforts at a faculty or department level. They note that diversity and intercultural considerations can become part of the classroom and the practice of many professional fields most effectively when they are addressed and incorporated during the curriculum design process. Diversity issues cannot successfully be incorporated into the curricula ‘by accident’ or in a half-baked manner. It can best be accomplished through a concerted effort at the course planning stage by all faculty members involved.

This book provides a glimpse into the possibilities of implementing diversity and cultural sensitivities into some curriculum components. The syllabus and an array of other practices are encouraged as ways to introduce diversity and intercultural elements to the curricula. For example, the readings in a course can be indicative of the importance and value placed on diversity by the instructor(s). The practical implications of these initiatives are described through the narratives of experiences at six institutions in a variety of disciplines i.e. speech pathology, dentistry, film studies, foreign languages, occupational therapy, medical education, pharmacy, etc. It is easy to feel burdened by the thought of incorporating yet another consideration into your curricula, but this book can serve more as an example rather than a burden, of what is ‘out there’ already.

Reference
Graduate student thesis writing seminar

June 4, 2010 - 8:30 to 4:00

Robert B. Schultz Lecture Theatre in St. John’s College

Do you:

Feel isolated?

Doubt if you have enough (or the right) research?

Struggle to organize your research?

Procrastinate or avoid writing?

Want to know how to work with an advisor effectively?

This one-day seminar is designed to address these questions and provide strategies and tools that you can use to complete your thesis or dissertation within a reasonable timeframe (while also reducing your stress along the way).

Everyone attends two morning sessions, which address research and writing, and an afternoon session on working with advisors. At the end of the day, you will have the choice of attending a session on copyright and your thesis; a session on how to paraphrase; or one on reference software.

This seminar is organized by Learning Assistance Centre and Student Advocacy, and hosted by The Faculty Graduate Studies, The Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Arts. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided. A description of the workshops, and information on how to register is available at: http://umanitoba.ca/student/u1/lac/gard_resources/index.html
Congratulations
CHET Graduates
2009 - 2010

Front Row L to R: Antonia Henriquez, Sunday Oghiakhe, Shadi Sepehri
Middle Row L to R: Nyla Dil, Caixia Yang, Meilian Xu, Xiumei Kang, Tahereh Arezoo, Ehsan Khafipour
Last Row L to R: Zhaohui Zhao, Tara Bortoluzzi, Ahmed El-Bebany, Vanessa DeClercq, Tim Pasma, Rajesh Pillai, Songqing Shan
Absent: Martin Agelinchaab, Ludivine Coudière
When the Center for History and New Media launched Zotero [zoh-TAIR-oh] in 2006 their goal was to create the next-generation scholarly research tool. How well have they succeeded? I have been using bibliography management tools like Procite and Refworks for over 20 years and was an early adopter of FURL and later switched to Diigo when it was launched. Whatever your experience using personal bibliographic software and social bookmarking tools, I think the recent launch of Zotero 2.0 is a game changer.

Zotero is both a Firefox extension and a “cloud computing” website. Zotero is a free, easy-to-use extension to help you collect, manage, cite, and share your research sources. It lives right where you do your work - in the web browser itself. The best way to learn about Zotero is to visit zotero.org and watch a few quick videos. Before you invest the time to learn about Zotero here are some examples of how it can be used.

**The annotated bibliography assignment**

Professor Zita wants her students to be able to critically evaluate scholarly sources in kinesiology. When she’s tried an annotated bibliography assignment in the past, she’s gotten a lot of poorly formatted bibliographies and text pasted from commercial websites. This year the students attend a Zotero workshop offered by their liaison librarian. In small groups her students use Sport Discus to save and tag articles to their Zotero group. Each student chooses an article to evaluate and attaches the critique to the Zotero information, which all students and Professor Zita can review. Using Zotero, the group formats the annotated bibliography in APA style. Since Zotero is a computer program there are a few things that aren’t quite right, and the group goes over the formatting. They document each correction and include this information with the assignment.

Because Zotero is part of Firefox and easy to use, at the end of the year her students comment that they have continued to use Zotero to keep track of their research for other assignments.

**The literature review**

Zafar is working on his thesis. He meets weekly with his advisor to discuss progress on the literature review. Field work takes his advisor out of the country for a few months. Using a private Zotero group and by attaching notes, Zafar is able to update the sources he’s finding and the advisor is able to monitor his progress. Zafar installs the Zotero plugin for his favourite word processing program and inserts citations from his Zotero database when he starts writing his thesis. When Zafar gets accepted at another institution to do his doctorate; his Zotero account moves with him.

**The collaborative research team**

Dr. Zaccheus is on a SHRCC funded research team studying homelessness and housing. Team members are from across Canada, and include partners in social agencies and government. As members of the team find articles, books, videos and websites the information is tagged, annotated and saved in an open Zotero group. Community groups are able to comment on documents on zotero.org. When it comes time for Dr. Zaccheus to submit a paper to the Canadian Journal of Urban Research, from Zotero he pastes the citations into MSWord in Chicago style.

Zotero recently started offering storage, and according to Zotero’s blog, “researchers around the world are eagerly joining the ranks of file-syncing Zoteros.” Each Zotero user has free access to up to 100 MB of storage, and users may also purchase additional storage. The Libraries is looking into institutional pricing for Zotero storage.
Download the Zotero Firefox extension

Register for a free Zotero account

Add the UML Link resolver http://sfx2.exlibrisgroup.com/umanitoba

Install Microsoft Word or Open Office plugin

Links and more information at umanitoba.ca/libraries/tools/zotero.shtml

Karen Keiller, karen_keiller@umanitoba.ca 474-8759.
Performance Elements of Instruction

Can Authentic Teaching Involve Performance?

■ The Three E’s Teaching Voice: Effective, Engaging, Enthusiastic

■ Instructor Expressiveness: Gesture & Non-Verbal Behaviours in Successful Instruction

“But I’m just not funny”, Creating Laughter in Learning

For full descriptions, dates & times for these Faculty Development Workshops please visit: www.umanitoba.ca/uts

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Do you have a quick question on teaching and learning?

Email: cheryl_kristjanson@umanitoba.ca

and receive a response within 3 working days.