

Chapter 13

The Impact of Intentional Pedagogies on Student Learning in an Experiential Programme in Nepal: Three SoTL Practitioners' Systematic Reflections

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ABSTRACT

This chapter shares three SoTL practitioners' critical reflection on the impact of our teaching on student learning in alignment with our teaching philosophies. Based on our core teaching philosophies that premise on lifelong pedagogy through experiential learning, scholarly teaching, and knowledge co-construction, we critically reflected on how they fostered deep learning through the use of "structured reflection and debrief" as an intentional pedagogy in a short-term overseas experiential learning course within a residential college in a Southeast Asian university. The systematic analyses of the ethnographic documentation of students' daily debrief reflections suggest the effectiveness of our intentional pedagogies to help students think critically, and question the complexities of social, economic, and environmental factors in context at a higher level and develop empathy. Mapping SoTL beliefs and commitment in actions is a well-balanced task and this chapter aims to inform how it can be effectively done in higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

SoTL is a common practice among educators in higher education institutions in Singapore and across the globe, and it is widely encouraged in the university teaching community. Educators in different disciplines at our university are encouraged to adopt evidence-based best practices in teaching, systematically investigate the impact of our teaching on student learning, and adopt reflective teaching practices to continue to improve their teaching. In this chapter, as SoTL practitioners, we aim to present a teaching and learning case example where we critically reflect on how to foster deep learning (Hattie, 2012) through the use of “structured reflection and debrief exercise” as an intentional pedagogy in a short-term overseas experiential learning course within a residential college (RC) in a Southeast Asian university. Guided by the ethos of active citizenship and community engagement, this RC provides a vibrant living-and-learning programme (LLP) for students to learn through interdisciplinary and out-of-classroom settings. Both formal and informal curricula define the different aspects of learning within the LLP. Under the formal curriculum, this course offers students an interdisciplinary and interactive platform that connects community development, intercultural theories and discourses on conservation to grounded practices through classroom discussions and field visits. A multimodal method of inquiry is used to explore the concepts and issues related to community development, culture, and conservation in Nepal. Students immerse themselves in a cross-cultural setting, expand their intellectual horizons, and broaden their cultural understanding through continual reflection on intercultural experiences. In the last run of this course, we taught it as a team of three multi-disciplinary educators. Grounded in ethnographic documenting of collective reflections of the daily debriefs in Nepal and critically analysing them using the lens of the learning outcomes of the course, the case example demonstrates the benefit of systematic analyses of innovative pedagogical practices to understand its impact on deep learning for students.

Our journey as faculty members in the university where there is a heavy focus on evidence-based practice has enabled us to become critically reflective educators. Being part of the academic learning environment at the college which is committed to collaborations and collegial partnerships with other entities in the university like centres dedicated to the development of teaching and learning about pedagogical design has benefitted us immensely. There are continuous seminars and workshops offered by the centre to guide faculty members in our thinking about teaching practices, identify the gaps in our practices and design evidence-based pedagogical interventions to improve student learning. Further, there are also mini grants provided to encourage faculty members to form learning communities to have constructive conversations with colleagues from different disciplines and experience a professional discourse emerging in ideas of new forms of teaching and learning. The case example helps to anchor our experience as reflective educators. By unpacking the experience, as SoTL practitioners in Singapore, we aim to demonstrate how our SoTL practices on the impact of intentional pedagogies on student learning in an experiential programme could contribute to the important and evolving SoTL literature, especially in the context of Asia, and illustrate how intentionality, co-construction and reflection are key to building a scholarly teaching and learning environment in higher education.

The Value and Practice of SoTL to Reflective Educators

Before we delve into the case example, it is important to identify who we are as educators and how we situate ourselves as SoTL practitioners. Our university strongly encourages evidence-based best teaching practices that promote student-centred teaching. Thus, our SoTL practice is defined by our

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