

Chapter 11

Delightfully, Difficult Work: Transformation through Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

Many times students enroll in courses with the sole intention of learning new content or skills. While this is a reasonable goal, a longer term vision for students towards one of a transformed individual educates the whole person. Transformation through education has been studied for years (Kegan, 1994; Baxter-Magolda & King, 2004; and Belenky et al., 1986). This chapter is designed to examine the framework that explains the process of the transformational growth of students in becoming self-authoring. This chapter will also discuss the scholarly role that transformation plays for instructors through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Both theories have similar requirements for reflection, dialogue with peers and continuous growth. The need to design experiences that explicitly support students to reflect on their assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, develop a content language, and make connections between theory and practice will be discussed. The impact of explicitly making these ideas transparent to students illustrates the importance of modeling and valuing reflective feedback by instructors to enhance the learning process. Ideally, well-designed course dynamically shapes instructors' thinking about their teaching and students' ways of thinking about their learning.

INTRODUCTION

Reflection and transformation, in educational circles today, are quickly becoming the latest buzz words. Current conversations include portfolios, journaling and online discussions as ways for

students to become more aware of their cognitive learning patterns. The intention of this chapter is weave together the theories of critical reflection (Bolton, 2005), self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004) and a feedback cycle (Brookfield, 2000) to better impact learning; also to introduce the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for instructors as a systematic way to reflect on their

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teaching. These four theories intertwine the reflective feedback cycle into a teaching and learning design to be mutually beneficial. The outcome of incorporating a feedback cycle is to illustrate the different developmental levels, teaching and learning preferences and ways to construct knowledge between instructors and students.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical Framework

Transformative Teaching

Transformative learning must begin with instructors who are themselves transformed. Instructors at times see teaching and learning as separate entities. Instructors conceptualize a scope and sequence of content and incorporate a pedagogical method for delivery. It may be lecture, debate, cooperative learning or other methods. However, the impetus of learning falls solely on the shoulders of the student. In fact, many times instructors are frustrated that students aren't "getting it" or view students as lazy. It is in this moment that the essence of transformative teaching is embraced or resisted. Whose responsibility is it to learn? Instructor or student? The goal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is to mediate the why and how of self-assessing one's teaching and the promotion of learning. Baxter Magolda (1999) puts it simply, "Educational reformers tell us that our traditional style of teaching – giving students information – does not yield that [transformative] outcome. Yet when many of us genuinely try to engage students differently, we become the source of their dissatisfaction" (p. 5). Those traditional ways include the sole use of direct instruction such as lecture, summative assessment and teacher directed discussion with predetermined outcomes. While students say they want to be engaged, engagement requires risk, preparation and the possibility of being challenged by one's peers.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

A change in pedagogy is necessary to transform student learning, the systematic assessment of an individual's teaching and the effect on student outcomes is called the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). SoTL is defined by the Carnegie Foundation (Cambridge, 2001) as "problem posing about an issue to teaching or learning, study of the problem through methods appropriate to the disciplinary epistemologies, applications of results to practice, communication of results self-reflection and peer review" (p. 1). The SoTL framework establishes that each discipline has signature pedagogy such as inquiry for science and narrative for English. Medical and law schools also incorporate signature pedagogies supported by a set of rules of engagement such as problem-based learning and debate, respectively. SoTL is inter-disciplinary and an application used primarily in content disciplines. It is only recently that interdisciplinary work is inclusive of those with an education focus. It is the explicit review and investigation of those signature pedagogies that supports the work of academia and the transformation of students.

The emergence of the SoTL (namely in the last twenty years) framework moves reflective practice for instructors past the concern of having to create a less rigorous curriculum toward systematic scholarly teaching. Boyer (1990) began the process of reconceptualizing the way instructors think about their teaching by proposing four areas of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and teaching. His goal was to promote academic teaching as having a civic impact. Boyer states "Teaching is also a dynamic endeavor involving all the analogies, metaphors, and images that build bridges between the teacher's understanding and the student's learning. . . . When defined as scholarship, however, teaching both educates and entices future scholars" (p. 23). The goal Boyer expresses is that teachers are also learners when interaction

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