

Pursuing Teaching Excellence

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Frameworks

- The relationship between excellence and student-centred learning (SCL): essential criteria
- Average versus excellent
- Removing the barriers to SCL: biography as trigger
- Excellence and creativity
- A Standards Framework incorporating best practice approaches: excellence as a 'rounded' concept

Step 1: defining excellence

- Some quotations are used to initiate discussion of what we should aspire to be/become: the metamorphosis of teaching effectiveness: ‘...born, not made’.
- No room for mediocrity, being average, **only excellent**: this should be our aspiration.
 - ‘Talent alone is not enough. Great teachers know this.’ (Pinsky et al., 1998)
 - ‘Good painters copy. Great painters steal.’ ??
 - **Jensen quotation** which encapsulates the concepts (average/excellent) extremely well.

Step 2: who is excellence for?

- Answer with reference to the purpose of education...which is??
- And to the question, 'Who or what is our greatest resource? Discuss.
- So, if X is your greatest resource, and Y the purpose of teaching, what can be concluded from this?
- Hopefully, that an essential ingredient of excellence is??
 - SCL

Linking ideas together: step 3

- Defining student-centred learning: an activity to help fine-tune this follows. We look at a definition and provide a critique.
- We try and arrive at a group consensus: not easy, but ownership is needed and is essential.
- Evaluation of the implications for teaching must necessarily follow: using a blog or reflective diary to probe further. Am I a student-centred teacher...or not?

Next framework: barriers to SCL

- We then examine some of the more prevalent barriers, beginning with the use of autobiography and or biography.
- Additionally, participants are asked to think about the word they should (perhaps) use most often while teaching. Which is....?
- Reflections and evaluations are built in, as follows:

Experienced 'Barriers to Learning': autobiography

- We can remind ourselves, in the first instance, of 'barriers' that we ourselves experienced as students in classroom contexts/lecture theatres etc.
- Which, for you, were the greatest?
- What, for you, caused the most difficulty?



Take a few moments:

- Take a few moments to reflect on this, then think-pair-share
- Examples are then taken from pairs and presented on a blank screen



A blank slide...whaaaaaat??

Experiences are recalled: step 4

- A list of recalled experiences is compiled: anonymity is assured.
- **Unforgiving and unforgettable** negatives are stated.
- Categories are noted; gender/level/characteristics etc.
- How guilty am I? Transparency and honesty. Traits of excellence in themselves??

Now let's see: comparing subjective and objective realms: **step 5**

Meaning and congruence: you/me/research

A structured approach: (important for evaluation purposes)

Barriers: the role of research in the SOLT (key writers noted)

- at the **start** of the teaching session
- as teaching **progresses**
- the final stages of teaching

Generally referred to as 'Common Weaknesses':

Purpose:

- Here one is trying to establish the need to evaluate within a continuum
- To see teaching as an ongoing process with inherent complexities and bounded by time

In the beginning:

- **No** overview of content: structure of the presentation is not explained
- Content relevance is **not** established: ‘We are looking at this today because...’ **Better still**, ‘Why are we looking at this today?’
- Student comments/clarifications are **not** requested before proceeding

In addition:

- Few if any links to prior learning are made
- Limited attention to the environment for learning
- Teacher dominance: evident in?
- Too much learner knowledge is assumed

As Class Progresses the Barriers are:

- Saying too much: teacher-talk continues to predominate
- Speaking too quickly/slowly/inaudibly
- **Losing sight of purpose...which is? Ausubel.**
- Not highlighting/emphasising points of greatest importance
- Absence of closure/teacher-dominated closure; understanding not assessed
- No **constructive alignment****: outcomes and content out of kilter: digressing/irrelevancies creep in ****But hold on, what is that?**

Leaving Students Out through:

- Ineffective pacing
- Covering too much (**deep learning?**): **now what is that?**
- Ineffective linking of sections: not asking students to establish meaning for self and others
- Absence of critical thinking time and wait time^{**}: **all transmission and no critical thinking**

In addition:

- Using complex language unnecessarily, thus an inability to explain clearly
- Rapid/unfocused questioning; no discussion

Learners and Learning

- Overlooking types of learners: allowing one's own style of learning to influence teaching style: **MI**
- Yet: see handout and Jensen quotation
- Using whole-class/didactic teaching only, **therefore limited stimulus variation**
- Forgetting that the greatest resource is...?

Step 6 is embedded

- In a short space, new terms, new insights are (hopefully) acting as prompts to reflection and evaluation.
- For many, this is occurring for the first time.
- What is the opposite of deep? Really!
- How intelligent am I? **Wrong question entirely!!**

Step 7: not finished quite yet

- Your values and beliefs: an activity:
- Participants are asked to consider own value system and how/if they apply it to their teaching
- For many, this is again new: the seeds of reflection are sown yet again.
- Each is asked to state most important. Whiteboards are used to record. Can be circulated to 'protect' identity.

Step 8: two domains

- The affective domain
- The instructional domain

- For example....

- Note how we are addressing throughout, criteria that may be used to evaluate teaching, but the criteria are self- and group-directed.

Affective and Instructional

- Inclusive and open
- Caring and warm
- Intuitive and creative
- Responsive
- Fair-minded
- Generous
- Adaptable
- Reflective
- Sets clear objectives
- Informs students
- Is Articulate and
- Well-organised
- Promotes student independence
- Is Knowledgeable
- Assesses formatively

Excellence and Creativity

- As personal innovation
 - Taking risks
 - A questioning approach
 - Student engagement
 - Novel tasks
 - Doing something new
 - Consequences considered
 - Different perspectives
 - Letting go
 - A role model
- (HEA, Creativity in HE, Norman Jackson)

And finally: A Standards Framework

- All embracing, so difficult to design
- Builds on the interactions with colleagues, one's own personal experiences and expertise
- Not to be adhered to slavishly; nonetheless...
- Is effectiveness the same as excellence?

A Teaching Standards Framework for Effective Teaching

Effective Teachers

- Develop knowledge and understanding by...
- Employ flexible and creative strategies in order to...

Example Criteria

- setting precise, attainable and measurable learning outcomes.
- employing active and interactive learning and teaching methods to develop student-centred learning.
- make learning enjoyable and student-centred.
- develop 'deep' rather than 'surface' learning.

A Teaching Standards Framework for Effective Teaching

Effective Teachers

- Plan their teaching systematically, placing due emphasis on student-centred learning by...
- ❖ employ and evaluate recognised essential teaching skills, including those of...

Example Criteria

- careful prioritising of the knowledge and skills students require.
- effective management of class teaching time.
- ❖ set induction and closure.
- ❖ questioning and discussion.

A Teaching Standards Framework for Effective Teaching

Effective Teachers

- Demonstrate understanding of...

❖ Effective teachers value...

Example Criteria

- individual differences and the use of inclusive teaching strategies.
- strategies that promote e-learning for student-centred teaching.
- valid and reliable assessment strategies.

- ❖ diversity and inclusiveness.
- ❖ collegiality
- ❖ self-evaluation/reflective practice.