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Edited by / Sous la direction de
Margaret Anne Smith
and Dale Roach



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Where is “Cahoots”, and how do I get there?

Kate Frego, Biological Sciences (retired), University of New Brunswick, Saint John

Abstract

The phrase for the theme of this Teaching Showcase, “in cahoots”, is initially puzzling, but as I unpack the expression, I find a depth and breadth of applications to our academic community of teachers and learners (noting that these roles are completely interchangeable). I summarize the essential elements of “being in cahoots”, and argue that educators are at their best when they are “in cahoots”: with one another, with their students, with the university, and the wider community.

Keywords: welcome; in cahoots; subversive; collusion; conspiracy; collaboration

When I was told the title for this showcase, “In Cahoots”, my first response was.... huh?? I know that, when my father accused my siblings and me of “being in cahoots”, he didn’t mean it was necessarily a good thing. But in keeping with my love of imagery and metaphors, I envisioned Cahoots as a PLACE, with everything that entails: streets, addresses, citizens, visitors, commuters. Intriguing. So I did what any good academic would do: I looked it up.

To be in cahoots:

1. working together (often secretly) toward a shared goal
2. in collusion , conspiracy or collaboration

Etymology: approx 1829, from French “cahute” (cabin) (McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs)

Now I had the picture: working together—check; shared goal—check. Pretty innocuous, generally productive. But with the possibility of being somewhat subversive. I LIKE that part! I also like the probable origin of the word. I imagine being in a cozy cabin with like-minded others, sharing the day-to-day chores.

But this immediately sparked a raft of questions: how does it fit into our academic world, of teaching and learning? What does it mean to “be in cahoots” as an educator? Does the conceptualization of the term provide helpful insights? (It also begs the question: is it possible to be OUT of cahoots with someone? Something to ponder, perhaps in a cozy cabin.)

I am here to welcome you to this place we call “Cahoots”, and to point out some of its highlights before you head off to explore it further. Here in Cahoots, we who share a vision work together, occasionally with good-humoured subversion and, whenever possible, have fun doing it.

It is admittedly a no-brainer to say that “Academia is a social enterprise”; all of us could be said to be in cahoots with a myriad of others... And really, who would want to be working anywhere else? Isn't Cahoots a great place to be? We work with people who do share our goals, who are mutually supportive, who appreciate and trust one another to “get things done”. Who would YOU rather be? The lone researcher, struggling to scale a giant obstacle, or a citizen of Cahoots, supported by colleagues and students? In fact, you could say that researchers are the epitome of being in cahoots. As Isaac Newton (1676) (or possibly Bernard of Chartres in 12th C) said, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” Sometimes we even have to challenge one another, while working on a bigger common goal. For example, the peer review process makes use of shared AND diverse perspectives. We are in cahoots in our service: as members of the university community, we are in cahoots as we reach out to share our expertise with others, offering our specialized tools to solve broader problems. We are in cahoots in teaching: we mentor new colleagues at all stages, including guiding our students in the transition to colleague. In fact, I can say my job description is to “BE IN CAHOOTS”.

Being in cahoots is not just any kind of collaboration; it carries power that that we may not always appreciate. Being in cahoots increases our ability to get things done; Cahoots is bigger than the sum of its citizens. It emphasizes the advantages of working with others. Even superheroes need an occasional boost! In Cahoots, our vision is sharpened—we work together to bring it into focus. It encourages recognition of, and focus on, shared vision and goals. And when we move into Cahoots and set up shop, we find that the sense of being part of a community brings a transcendent quality to our efforts: we go from strength to strength as we work together.

Being in cahoots is greater than mere collaboration.

In cahoots to promote teaching. I've seen firsthand what a group in cahoots can accomplish, in our very own VPETC (the Vice President's Excellence in Teaching Committee), which was actively involved in organizing this Showcase. As a group of volunteers, comprising faculty, staff, and grad students from every unit of our campus, it sprang to life over 20 years ago, has stayed together, meeting twice a month come hell or high water, and has accomplished so much. As Henry Ford said “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” The VPETC's success springs from aspects that are “the best of cahoots”. I recently surveyed VPETC members, past and present, for their thoughts on the history of the committee and its accomplishments. This little wordle (Fig. 1) captures their sense of what kept the group committed over the years. Several themes stand out, and from them, I propose the essential elements of being in cahoots (Fig. 2).

SUBVERSION	TRUST	ENGAGEMENT
FUN	VISION	MUTUAL SUPPORT
PERSISTENCE		

One essential element is *persistence*. Our first-ever Teaching and Learning Centre was officially opened in 2009, with a celebration; its first-ever coordinator Judy Buchanan cut the cake. A TLC was a central part of our shared vision for UNBSJ, beginning in the 1990s. The proposal was finally accepted by both senates in 2000. And only *9 years later*, it came to fruition! Now that is persistence! (Of course, it still does not have a budget line, and our coordinator is still part time, but the VPETC does not give up! We are in cahoots, and we will work towards that goal.)

3

One event that was raised time and again was the event we held in 2008—we wanted to bring our educators together to share ideas and inspiration and energy, without a specific theme. We looked at the proposed presentations and agreed that it was a total hodgepodge! Well, one of *my* pet beliefs is nothing brings people together like food, so we decided to make it a Maritime kitchen party. The event participants would lunch on homemade biscuits and hodgepodge soup. (For those uninitiated, this is a traditional soup made with fresh young vegetables in a broth of milk and butter.) VPETC members got together in our kitchen, and made up vats of soup, and dozens of biscuits (using Judy Buchanan's mother's special recipe). We served the hodgepodge in enormous crock pots... and even gave one away as a door prize.

That event was a HOOT! The energy and laughter of the preparations carried over into the event itself, and everyone came away feeling well fed intellectually, socially and of course nutritionally.

But there is another secret ingredient to living happily in cahoots. (Remember that one of the elements in the definition is collusion.) Cahoots has a healthy dose of good humoured *subversion*.

The idea that teaching and learning have a subversive element is certainly not new to academia. Socrates said, "To find yourself, think for yourself". Much has been written about "teaching as a subversive activity" (e.g., Kecht, 1992; Postman & Weingartner, 1971). But finding ways to change the system by thinking outside the box is not only productive, it also brings about a powerful bond. An episode of this that showed up repeatedly in the survey of VPETC members was what I like to call the Great Cracker Caper. We were having issues with the campus food service at the time (who shall remain nameless); our very limited budget was just not enough to supply even minimal refreshments. So we ordered a \$50 cheese and cracker tray from the campus food services, and then sent two very subversive VPETC members to the grocery to spend \$50 on cheese and crackers there. Our plan was to photograph them for comparison, and send them to the VP with our concerns. Well, ironically, the original photos on my hard drive are "corrupt"—but you can probably imagine: one small plate with some scruffy-looking bits of cheese and a few broken crackers, vs a lavish spread of delectable treats.

Given the treasures to be found there, it's clear that students also benefit from a field trip to Cahoots. But for some, it is a foreign land. Sometimes the hardest part is the first step: finding a way to focus on a common vision for the time we have together. My personal opinion is that the hook is to introduce the students first to the fun, and the good-natured subversion, and use those elements to *leverage* a shared vision. I recently learned that TV chef Alton Brown articulated this better than I ever could: "Laughing brains are more absorbent."

In spite of what the students may sometimes think, teaching and learning in Cahoots is not boot camp. We are not bullying young adults to climb obstacles that we have built to thwart them; we are inviting them to climb *with us*, to a mountaintop where they, and we, can see further.

As I prepared for retirement, I've enjoyed remembering some of the highlights of my teaching career, and I suddenly realized that the most memorable, for me and for my students, were times when we were well and truly in cahoots... with all the elements of the *best* of Cahoots.

For example, I once told my Plant Ecology class that I wanted to take them to a day-long meeting of forest stakeholders, so they could see applied ecology in action... but that we couldn't, because the organizers felt they didn't have enough chairs or refreshments for an additional 25 people. So my students put their heads together, and came up with a plan. We went to the meeting, taking our own folding chairs and refreshments—which they shared with the other participants. My students went on

to be active members of the stakeholder group, and some of them did Honours and Masters projects within its framework.

Another year, in my course on human uses of plants, called Economic Botany, the students learn to make paper, perfume, tofu, and other products from raw plant materials. Of course, alcoholic beverages are a common plant product in many cultures and it would be a pity to leave them out! But the university has strict policies against spirits on campus. We had to fight some battles to get permission to do our “fermentation lab”, and definitely ran into some objections from vigilant campus security, who actually broke through two locked doors to confiscate our “hootch”. Fortunately good sense, via our Vice President at the time, prevailed and everything was returned to us. But that little bit of collusion worked its magic. Not only did the students that year delight in their rebellious ways, but years later, students know the course’s mythology, and are anxious to visit the famed craft brewery in Cahoots.

Cahoots is an intriguing, productive and welcoming place to be. And even if you can’t live in the uptown area of this thriving metropolis, it’s just a short commute from the academic suburbs! So whatever we do, let’s incorporate the best, most powerful, parts of Cahoots: let’s take risks, take precautions, activate our sense of humour, and let ‘er rip!

Cahoots: welcome to this fascinating place! Let’s spend the day here, exploring its sights and sounds, with our presenters as expert guides of their favourite landmarks. Let’s celebrate being in cahoots, with the shared goal of learning how others have succeeded.

In Cahoots: together, we’ll succeed.

Acknowledgements

My extensive time in Cahoots has been made delightful by the warm welcome of my neighbours at UNB and beyond. I extend my most sincere thanks to the members of the VPETC, in particular, who not only invited me to open this Teaching Showcase, but have been the giants on whose shoulders I’ve had the privilege to stand.

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Author

Kate Frego (Ph.D. Botany, University of Toronto). Kate has “bludgeoned her students with enthusiasm” beginning at Brandon University in 1977, with the last 23 years at UNB Saint John. She has won a variety of awards, most recently the 3M National Teaching Fellowship (2008). Retired in 2016, she was made Professor Emerita in Biological Sciences in 2017. She continues to teach at any opportunity—botany, as well as various fiber crafts. frego@unb.ca

Reflections on Delivering Synchronous Online Lectures Using Blackboard Collaborate

Andrew Carrothers, School of Business, University of Prince Edward Island

Abstract

Online classes are becoming increasingly popular with students, professors, and university administrators. A commonly cited disadvantage of online courses is the loss of classroom interaction amongst participants. One solution is to integrate synchronous (live) content into the online course structure. Blackboard Collaborate provides a web-based online classroom that offers a flexible environment in which to engage students. Students can use laptops, tablets, or smartphones to join the Blackboard Collaborate classroom.

Keywords: online education; synchronous content; Blackboard Collaborate

Introduction

Blackboard Collaborate is a real-time video conferencing tool that lets you add files, share applications, and use a virtual whiteboard to interact. Collaborate with the Ultra experience opens right in your browser, so you do not have to install any software to join a session.¹ I currently teach online courses in corporate, personal, and international finance. Two challenges faced when moving courses from a traditional classroom setting to an online environment are to keep the course atmosphere interactive and to ensure that the course is robust to academic dishonesty. Blackboard Collaborate enhances student experience in web courses by offering synchronous classroom lectures in which students can interact with the professor in real time. In my courses, I have many asynchronous elements that students can access at any time (such as pre-recorded lectures and assignments) but have received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the benefits of including some real-time content. I also use Blackboard Collaborate as my “fail safe” against university closures due to weather. As part of my course syllabus for traditional courses, I provide a link to my online classroom, and I instruct students that if the university is ever closed during a regularly scheduled class, I will conduct the lecture online during the normal class time. I record the session and post a web link to the recorded lecture so that students unable to attend can watch the lecture at their convenience. Student feedback indicates that they fully endorse this approach. For the professor, it eliminates the need to change any course deliverables. I have even used Blackboard Collaborate to hold a full day (9 hour) executive MBA class when UPEI was canceled on a winter Friday in 2015. To address the second challenge of minimizing the opportunity for academic dishonesty, I build a number of features into my online courses. First, I set up the course web

¹ <https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Collaborate>

page so that students cannot access assignments and exams until they have completed student confirmation of identity forms for each assessment element (see Appendix A for a sample of the form that I use for online assignments). I use “Google forms” because the software automatically tabulates the results for me in a spreadsheet. Students are less likely to commit academic dishonesty if they have “*digitally signed*” indicating that they will not. All students must complete online exams at the same time. For each exam question, I randomly draw from a large pool of questions of similar difficulty on a given topic. I also randomize the order of questions, so that, in effect, each student receives an entirely different exam, thereby minimizing the advantage of working as a group to complete the exam. There is simply not enough time to complete multiple different exams. I also place a higher weight on assignments for which it is entirely clear that each student is doing the work. For example, I have students submit the web link to short videos on assigned topics that they have uploaded (as unlisted) to YouTube. I see and hear the student’s performance, so the opportunity for academic dishonesty is low, all with the added benefit of having a greater sense of individual interaction with each student. The following discussion is a tutorial on using Blackboard Collaborate. One original contribution is my approach of using two display monitors while conducting my online classes which allows me to easily share with students whatever content I choose to display on my second monitor. The value of this approach is not highlighted in the Blackboard Collaborate programme instructions, yet it provides both the students and instructor with a much richer online classroom experience. I believe that users of Blackboard Collaborate will find this approach to be very beneficial.

The Basics

Open your Blackboard Collaborate classroom by clicking on the link for your classroom. Your link will automatically establish you as the class “moderator”. You provide a separate link to participants which prompts them to identify themselves when entering the classroom and gives them “permissions” that you assign as the moderator.

Share your audio and video (see the white arrows on Figure 1).

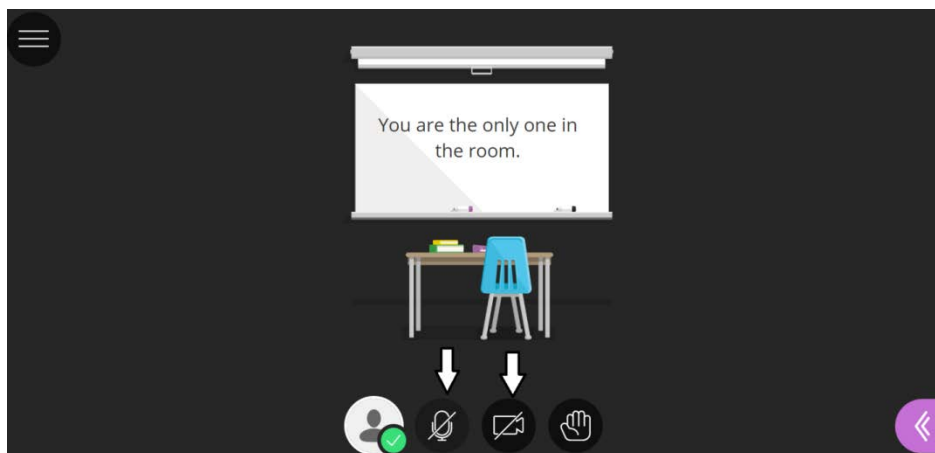


Figure 1. Sharing audio and video in Blackboard Collaborate

Then, start recording (see Figures 2 and 3).

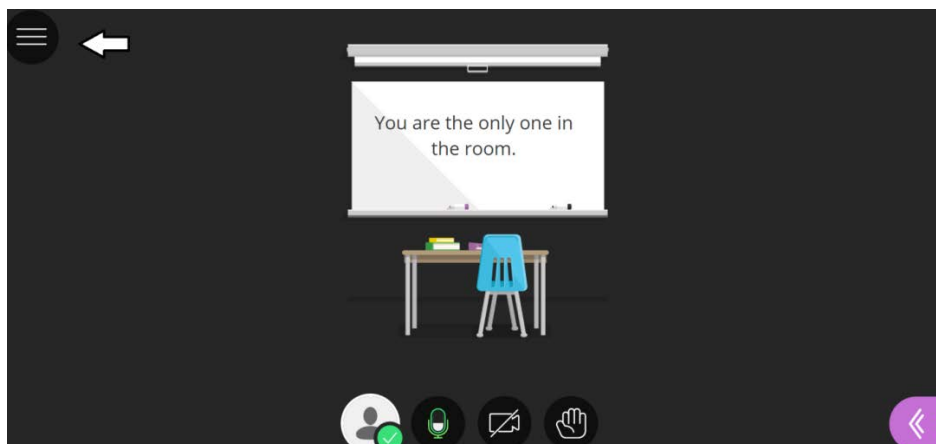


Figure 2. Opening the setup panel in Blackboard Collaborate

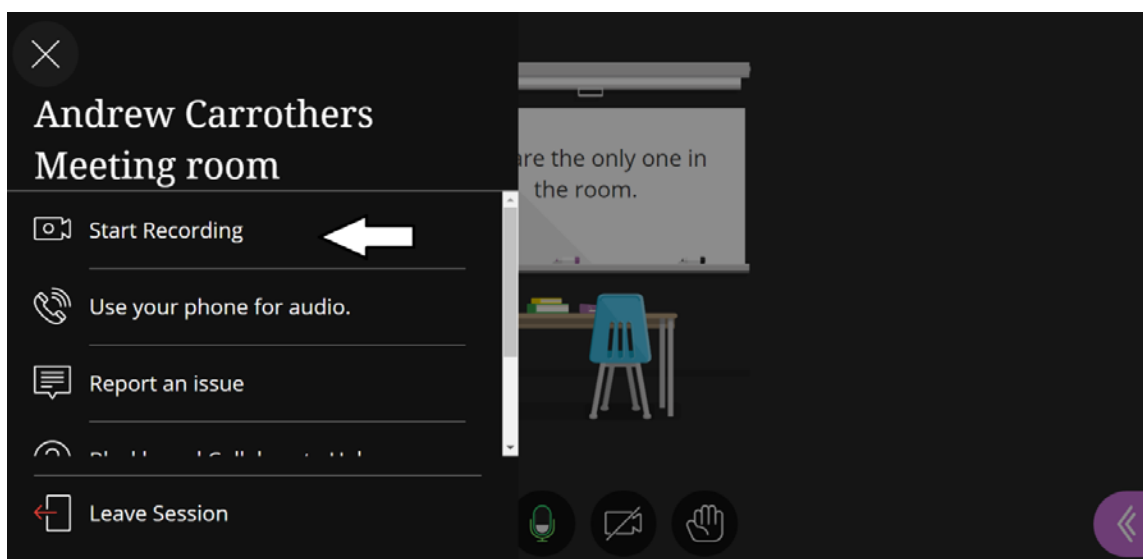


Figure 3. Recording a lecture in Blackboard Collaborate

Make your presentation. Stop recording and exit. You will receive a web link that you can post to allow those students who were unable to participate to watch the lecture at their convenience.

Blackboard Collaborate Features

To open the Collaborate Panel, click on the icon on the bottom right-hand side of the screen (see Figure 4).

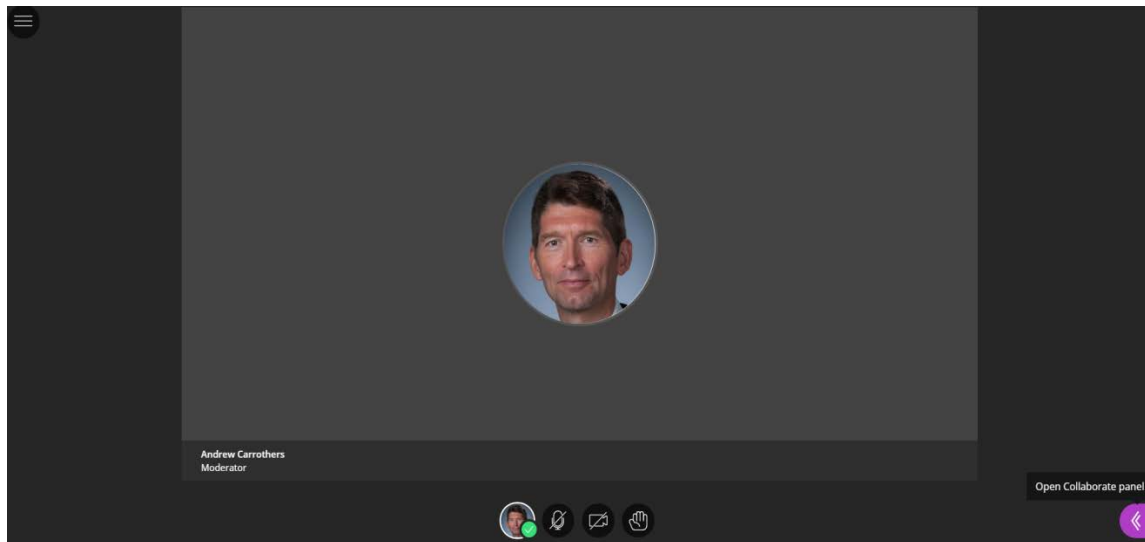


Figure 4. Opening the collaborate panel in Blackboard Collaborate

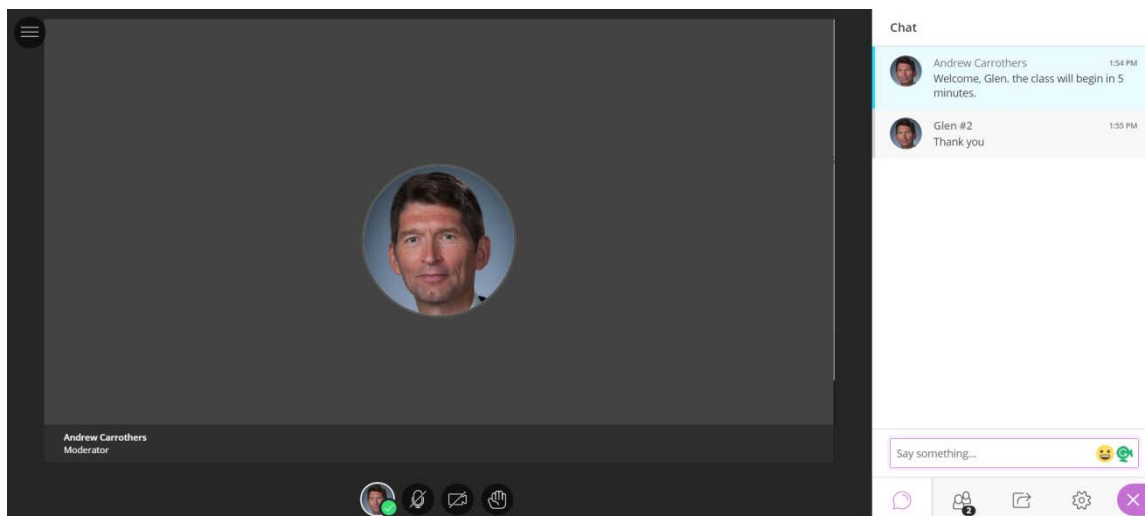


Figure 5. The chat feature in the collaborate panel of Blackboard Collaborate

The Collaborate Panel opens on the right-hand side (see Figure 5). By clicking on the four icons at the bottom of the panel, you can chat, view the participants, share applications, and configure your preferred settings. The chat feature (see Figure 5) is very intuitive. You can chat with the whole class, or with only other participants that you have designated as moderators. There is also a polling feature that allows the moderator to assess the level of learning before moving to another topic. The moderator chooses if and when to share the results of the poll with the class.

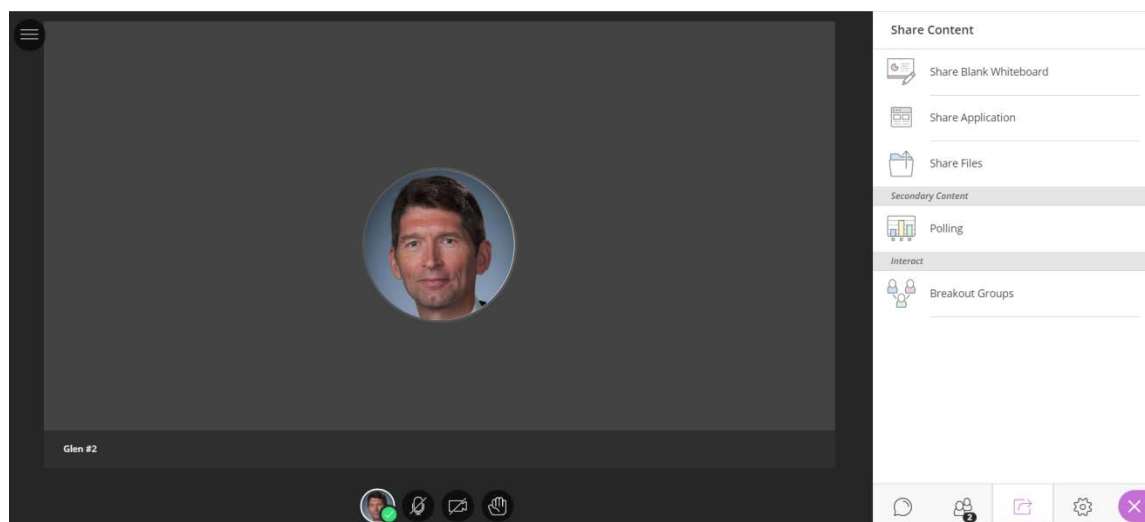


Figure 6. Sharing content in Blackboard Collaborate

Figure 6 shows the options for sharing content in Blackboard Collaborate. The moderator can share the whiteboard (see Figure 7), pdf (see Figure 8) and PowerPoint files, and applications such as spreadsheets (see Figure 11) and websites (see Figure 12). Note that while uploading pdf and PowerPoint files, the Blackboard Collaborate application runs a conversion process that takes time. Be sure to upload all of the files you need well before the start of your class.

The whiteboard is very intuitive and includes the following tools: select, pointer, pencil, shapes, text, colour pallet, and eraser. If you want to erase one object, select it first then click on the eraser. Otherwise, you clear the entire whiteboard screen. As the moderator, you choose whether other participants can mark on the whiteboard.

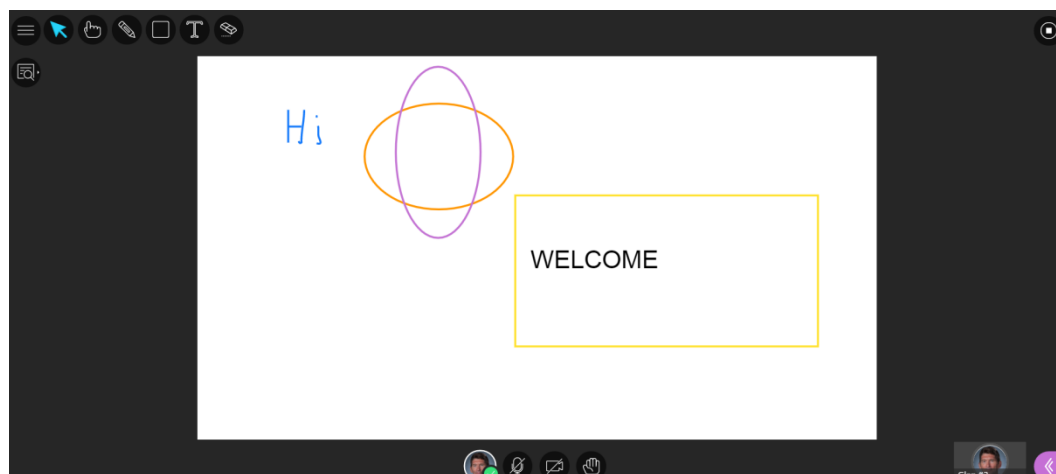


Figure 7. Sharing the whiteboard in Blackboard Collaborate

My preferred modus operandi is to run my classes using two monitors so that I can share my “second screen”. Using this method, I can share whatever I choose to open on my second monitor. The follow sequence is from a recording of an online lecture for a personal finance course in which I used pdf files (Figure 8), the course web page (Figure 9), an interactive online quiz (Figure 10), an Excel workbook (Figure 11), and a web application (Figure 12).

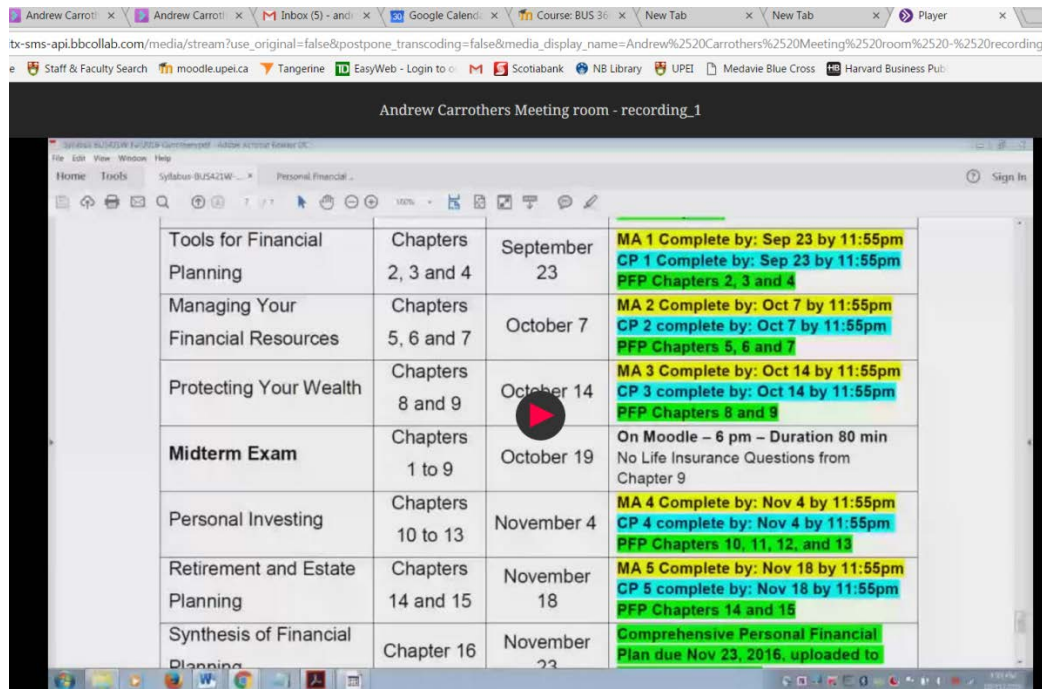


Figure 8. Sharing a PDF file

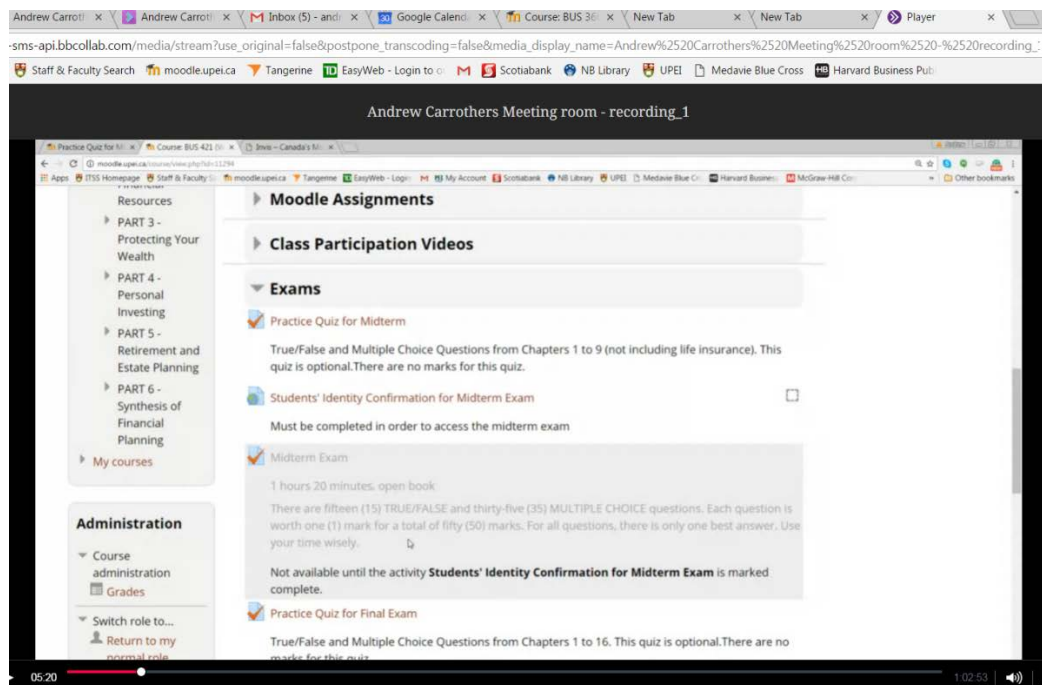


Figure 9. Sharing a course web page

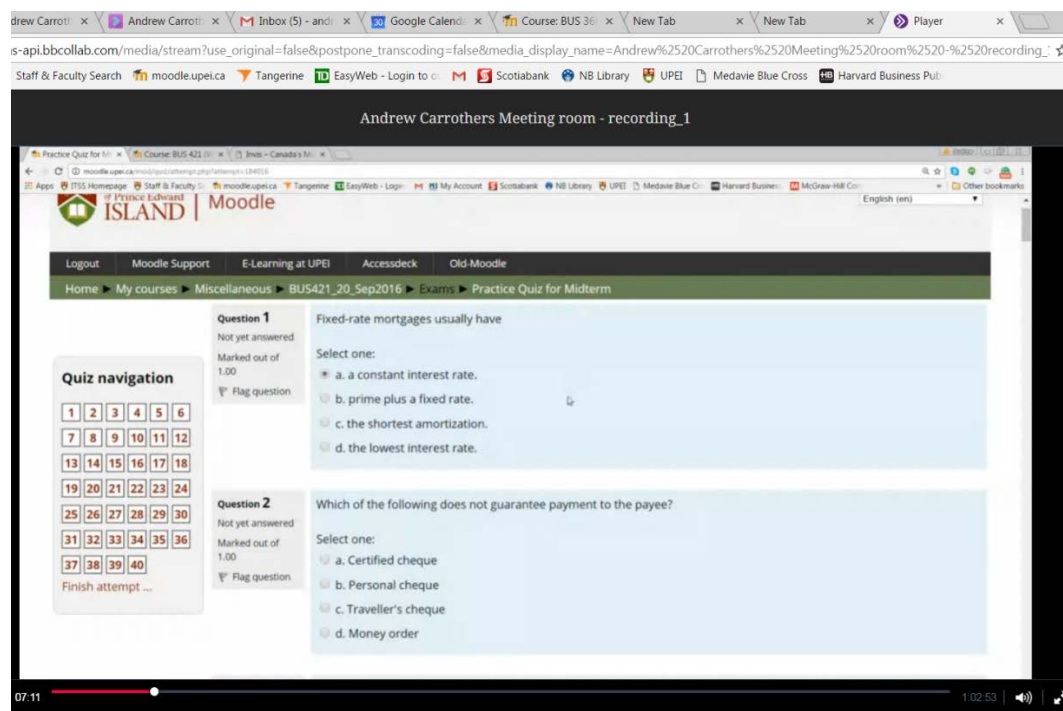


Figure 10. Sharing an online quiz

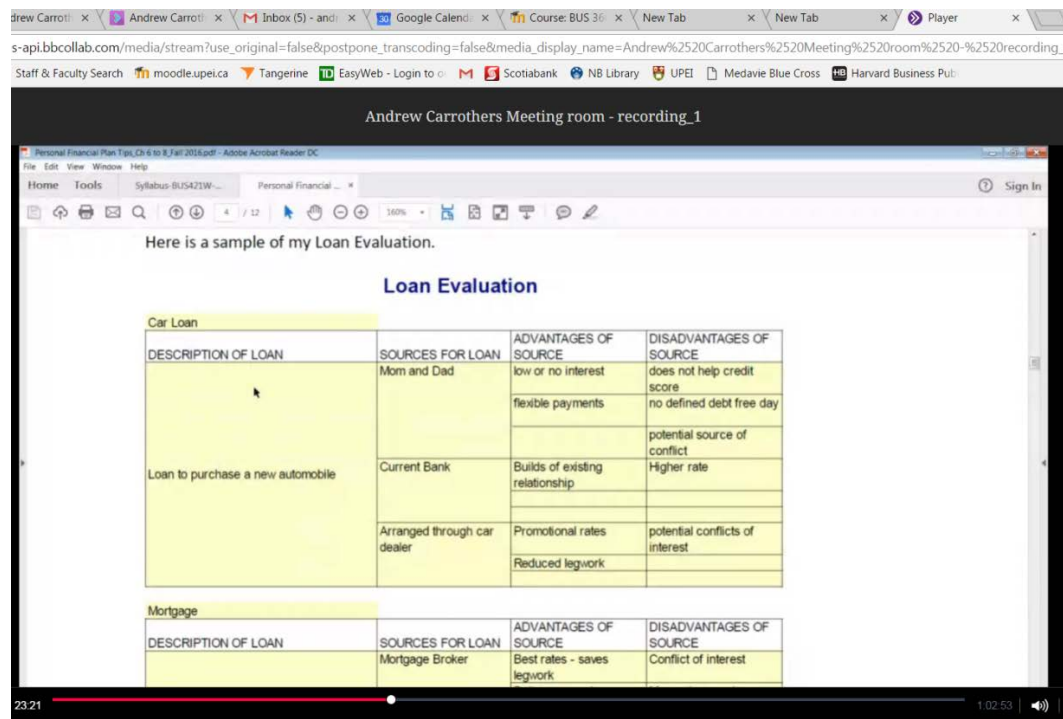


Figure 11. Sharing an Excel workbook

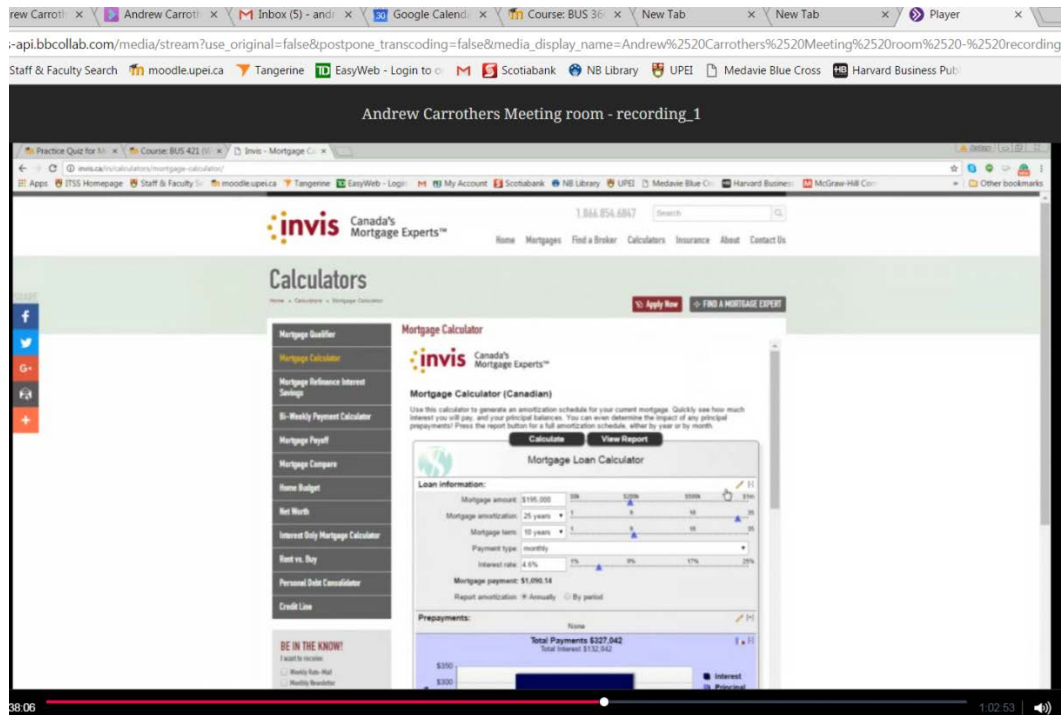


Figure 12. Sharing a Web application

The Collaborate panel also gives the moderator the ability to control a wide variety of settings such as audio and video setup, notifications, and level of student control. For notifications (see Figure 13), the moderator can select whether he or she wants audio or visual notification when students join or leave the session, post chat messages, or raise their hands.

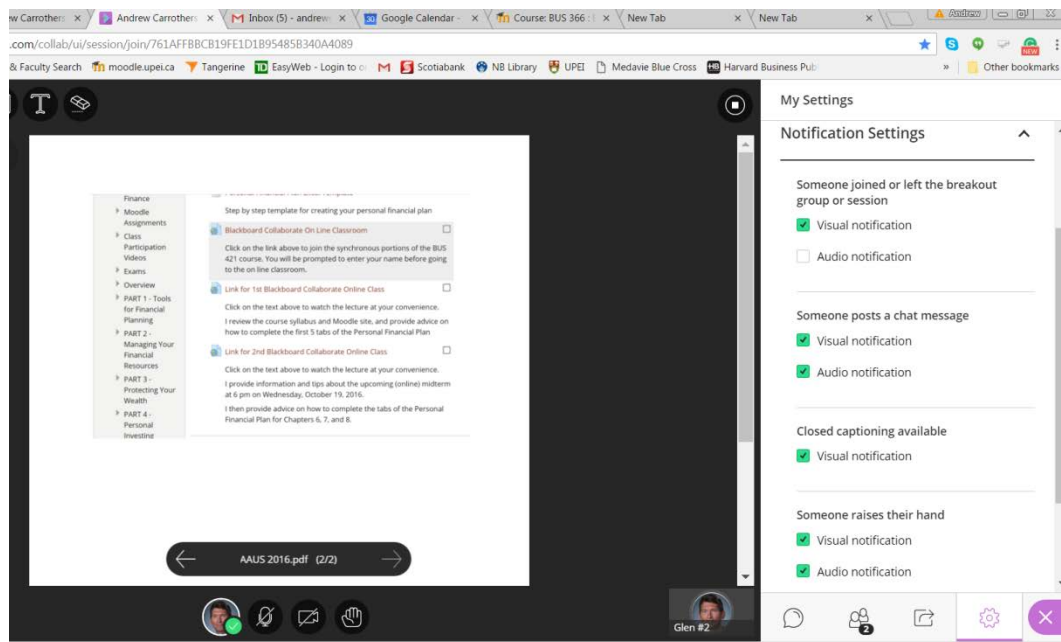


Figure 13. Example of notification settings

In “Session Settings”, the moderator can choose if he or she wants to see pictures of all participants and whether or not to allow participants to use their microphones, share their video stream, and write on the whiteboard.

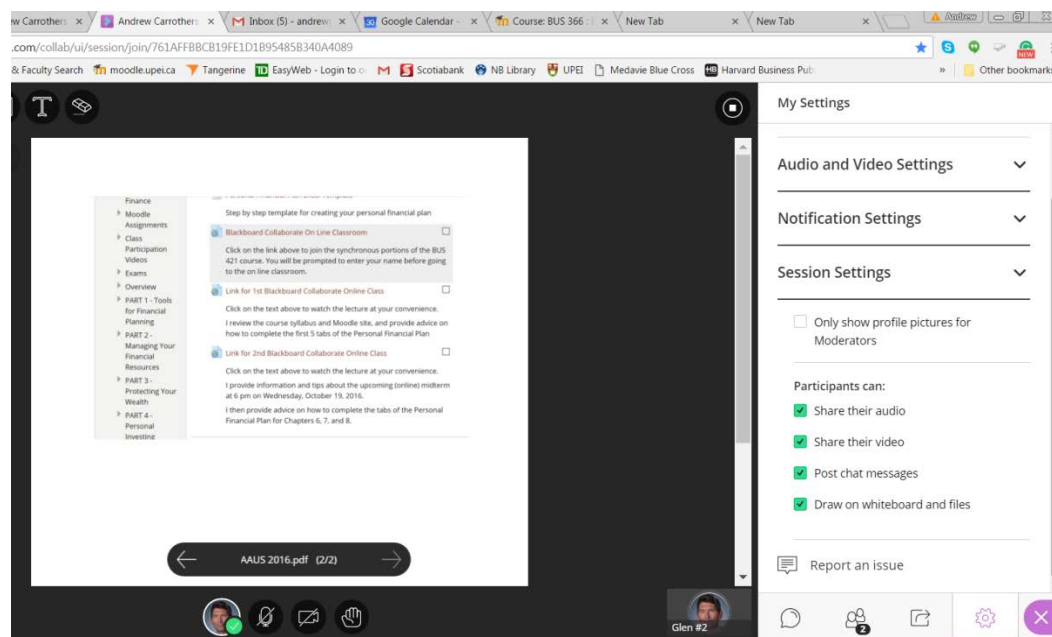


Figure 14. Example of session settings

Conclusions

Blackboard Collaborate is a user-friendly application that enables the instructor to add synchronous, interactive content to online courses. It can be effective in mitigating the impact of university closures due to weather by permitting the instructor to remain on schedule by conducting the canceled class online at the usual scheduled time. Because the instructor can record the Blackboard Collaborate lecture and post a link to it on the course website for later viewing, no students are at a disadvantage if they are unable to participate in the live session.

I use Blackboard Collaborate as an important element in my design of online courses that emphasize flexible and remote access, interactive and dynamic classroom experience, and robust academic integrity.

Appendix A

Example of a Student Identity Confirmation Form

▼ Form Settings

☒ Require University of Prince Edward Island login to view this form
☒ Automatically collect respondent's University of Prince Edward Island username
☐ Show progress bar at the bottom of form pages
☒ Only allow one response per person (requires login) ?
☐ Shuffle question order ?

Page 1 of 1

Student's Identity Confirmation

BUS 421 - Personal Finance - Moodle Assignments and Class Participation Videos

Please help me confirm your identity, and that you are completing the Moodle assignments and class participation videos for BUS 421 Fall Semester 2016 by yourself without being helped by anybody, and that you understand the UPEI Academic Regulation 20 by answering the following questions. You must complete this form in order to access the Moodle assignments and class participation videos.
Thank you and good luck.

Please read the following very carefully:

UPEI Academic Regulation 20 – Academic Dishonesty (UPEI Calendar, p. 104-105):

As a community of scholars, the University of Prince Edward Island is committed to the principle of academic integrity among all its participants. Academic dishonesty as defined in this Regulation will not be tolerated and, within the constraints of this Regulation and Academic Regulation 12, the University supports instructors in their efforts to deal effectively with cases as they may arise from time to time.

a) Actions which constitute academic dishonesty are considered an offence within the University and include:

- i. plagiarism, which occurs when a student submits or presents work of another person in such a manner as to lead the reader to believe that it is the student's original work; self-plagiarism is the submission of work previously submitted for academic credit without prior approval of the professor;
- ii. cheating on tests or examinations, including giving false reasons for absence;
- iii. falsifying records or submitting false documents, including falsifying academic records, transcripts, or other University documents, or misrepresenting one's credentials;

from the University;
 (iii) the President may impose suspension or expulsion from the University;
 (iv) the Senate may withhold or revoke a degree, diploma, or certificate.
 d) The student has the right to appeal through the provisions of Academic Regulation 12.

Name:*

Student ID number:*

I hereby certify that I am the person taking completing the Moodle assignments for BUS 421 Fall Semester 2016 without being helped by anybody or any website other than Moodle, and that I respect and understand the UPEI Academic Regulation 20. *

☐ YES
☐ NO

I accept this form as an Identity Confirmation document and I acknowledge that the above information is true. *

☐ YES
☐ NO

I acknowledge that Moodle Assignments and Participation Videos will remain open for 72 hours after the deadline specified in the course syllabus and in Moodle. I can complete the assignment without penalty during this grace period. I acknowledge that there will be absolutely no extensions once access in Moodle expires. I will not ask for an extension knowing that no extension will be granted.

☐ YES
☐ NO

Author

Andrew Carrothers is an Assistant Professor of Finance at the Faculty of Business at UPEI. He currently teaches in the areas of corporate, international, personal, and entrepreneurial finance. He holds a PhD in Finance from McMaster University. Prior to joining UPEI, Andrew gained extensive work experience as a senior manager at an S&P 500 company. He is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) charter holder and a member of Professional Engineers Ontario. acarrothers@upei.ca

In Cahoots—Out-Group Members or the Small Print about Side Effects

Thomas Mengel, Renaissance College, University of New Brunswick

Abstract

This paper is informed both by my experience with side effects of teaching and learning “in cahoots” and by my attempt to try to make sense of the experience in the light of relevant literature in my fields of leadership studies and adult learning. As such, the paper takes an approach as suggested by the “reflective practice” methodology first introduced by Schön (1983) and more recently again presented by Bolton (2014).

Furthermore, my learning reflections are inspired by the “What?”, “So what?”, and “Now what?” learning cycle introduced by Borton (1970). Hence, this paper will follow a respective three-step approach first describing the experience, second, reflecting on it, and, third, rethinking what has been and needs to be done.

In particular, I will first briefly introduce the context of a particular course I am facilitating including the unintended side effect of the polarized group dynamics and learner feedback that I experienced in recent runs of this course. Second, I will share some key findings of my own research into how “out-groups” form (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Northouse, 2015), what their impact might be on the process, and how this might play out in the particular context of teaching and learning “in cahoots”. Third, I will discuss strategies to mitigate the potential side effect of out-groups and to constructively bridge between out-groups and in-groups. Finally, I will provide conclusive recommendations that may help overcome the potential negative side effects of out-groups as a result of teaching and learning “in cahoots”.

Keywords: out-groups; in-groups; leadership; Leader-Member-Exchange theory; leader relations; engagement; reflective practice; experiential learning; self-directed learning; collaborative teaching

Introduction

“In cahoots” brings up images of conspirational and secretive get-togethers in groups may be behind closed doors or even in secluded cabins. These images make us wonder how learning in cahoots aligns with concepts of open and collaborative learning and what we might get ourselves into when going in cahoots with students.

Student engagement is dependent on and increased by working with students and including them in course preparation and delivery (Gonyea & Kuh, 2009; Huber & Hutchings, 2005; NSSE, 2016); thus, the emphasis switches from *students* to (co-) *learners* and from *instructors* to *learning facilitators* (as reflected by the preferred use of the terms *learner* and *learning facilitator* in this paper). At Renaissance

College (RC), the interdisciplinary leadership studies faculty at the University of New Brunswick (UNB), we constantly challenge ourselves by continuing the existing history of and tradition in working “in cahoots” and in building community with learners to achieve various learning outcomes (Mengel, 2006a; Mengel, 2006b; Zundel, Bishop, Carr, Clarke, Colford, Mengel et al., 2006). Furthermore, faculty at Renaissance College also hold themselves accountable for reflecting on their teaching and learning approaches and practices (Zundel & Mengel, 2007; Mengel, 2016).

In this tradition, this paper reflects on the experience of “out-groups” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Northouse, 2015) as an unintended side effect of teaching and learning in cahoots in the context of a self-directed learning and collaborative teaching approach in a recent leadership course: RCLP 4002 Change Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship (Mengel, 2015; Renaissance College, 2016). Further, this paper will discuss strategies to mitigate the potential side effects of out-groups. In particular, this discussion will apply the approach of “reflective practice” first introduced by Schön (1983) and more recently again discussed by Bolton (2014): “Reflective practice makes maps. Everyone needs thorough methods to sort through and learn from muddles, uncertainties, unclarities, mistakes and anxieties” (p. 3). To be clear, the differentiation between “in-groups” and “out-groups” is not to be interpreted as distinction between “good” or “bad” leadership or teaching and learning; however, the developing dichotomy between “in-groups” and “out-groups” will be reflected upon as unintended side-effect and measures of mitigation will be provided not to remove “out-groups” but to be more intentional about achieving the learning outcomes.

I offer my *map making* and *sorting through* the experience of out-groups as unwanted side effect of learning in cahoots in two steps. Based on Schön’s (1983) differentiation between “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action” I will first report on how I quickly made sense of and addressed experienced issues while still “in-action” and then I will present my reflections “on-action” and discuss how I — more thoroughly — worked through the experiences in the light of greater distance and based on a more comprehensive knowledge base (e.g., resulting from the review of relevant literature).

Furthermore, my learning reflections are inspired by the “What?”, “So what?”, and “Now what?” learning cycle introduced by Borton (1970). Hence, this paper will also follow a respective three-step approach first describing the experience, second, reflecting on it, and, third, rethinking what has been and needs to be done. Finally, relevant recommendations will be offered that help overcome the development of out-groups as potential side effects of teaching and learning in cahoots and that may go beyond the case in point.

Experience: Out-Groups in Self-Directed Learning and Collaborative Teaching

In this section I will first explain the concrete course experience and then describe how I tried to make sense of the experience while the course was still going on and to address some of the detected issues and problems immediately in the remainder of the course sessions (“reflection-in-action”; Schön, 1983). The story of this course, its challenges in regard to teaching and learning (except for the out-group experience discussed in this paper), and the resulting continuous re-design and improvement has recently been presented at UNB’s Kaleidoscope teaching and learning showcase (Mengel & Tantawy, 2016) and is told in more detail in a paper that has been submitted for presentation in the context of academic conferences both in the field of the scholarship of teaching and learning and in the field of leadership studies (Mengel & Tantawy, 2017a; Mengel & Tantawy, 2017b).

At RC I facilitate the course “RCLP 4002: Change Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship” (Mengel, 2015; Renaissance College, 2016). This course is a mandatory component of the BPhil-program and also

taken as an elective by some learners minoring in leadership studies; BPhil program participants graduate with a Bachelor of Philosophy in interdisciplinary leadership studies. In recent years, course participants have increasingly demonstrated heightened interest in or even played an active role in various social entrepreneurship initiatives within UNB and beyond. As a result, I have redesigned this course to be even more self-directed and collaborative; I put learners “in the driver seat” (Mengel, 2015, p. 1). This more adult-learner oriented approach also better caters to the needs of learners in the field of social entrepreneurship education where engagement of various stakeholders is at the core (Mengel, Tantawy, & McNally, 2016).

In particular, the new course design (first implemented in the winter of 2015) featured various opportunities for student input on and choices of different learning and assessment options (e.g., existing and self-selected cases and organizations, including their own start-ups) and assessments (matching the learning opportunities chosen by students). To balance students’ need for structure with increased learner centered flexibility (Mengel, Tantawy, & McNally, 2016) the course syllabus offered both a “default approach” of pre-selected learning opportunities and respective assignments for students who would favour a given learning path as well as flexible learning and assessment opportunities for learners who might prefer to self direct their learning (Mengel, 2015). It is important to note that both the “default approach” and the self-directed options could in principle both lead to the same range of course grades (A+ to F); in class I also emphasized this to avoid the perception that self-directed learners would be advantaged in terms of grades.

All of us engaged in the course with above average passion, excited about the new course features and relevant learning opportunities. While the excitement was palpable, of course the passion was demonstrated at different levels as is to be expected in every course. However, the half-way course feedback surprisingly demonstrated a fairly obvious polarization between learners who were highly satisfied with and excited about the flexible way by which they could self-direct their learning and learners who were somewhat puzzled by the perceived lack of clarity and direction. Apparently, learners who needed more structure and direction were not satisfied with the choice between the “default approach” and a more self-directed option as presented.

In my “reflection-in-action” (Schön, 1983) and based on some verbal comments of students I concluded that the opportunity to self-direct their learning chosen by some left the ones who opted for the pre-selected approach wondering what they might miss out on. Addressing these issues and sentiments in class and guiding students through the respective choices and opportunities resulted in an overall assessment of the course as “positive learning experience” for most learners; however, the polarization in regard to learners’ assessment of the flexibility and self-directedness of learning embedded in the course on one side and the clarity and structure provided by it was still present in the final course feedback also (Student Opinion Surveys, 2015).

For example, in response to the question ‘what aspects of the course should remain the same?’ one student commented that they highly appreciated “the freedom students are given to design their own course deliverables, and the opportunity students are given to practice self-directed learning” (Student Opinion Surveys, 2015, learner # 5), while another suggested that “there should be much more structure, and the students shouldn’t have to create their own class basically, because we come to class so that we can be given a class. The flexibility of this made learning very difficult” (Student Opinion Surveys, 2015, learner # 10).

While I should have been alerted by my knowledge of the respective adult learner literature particularly in the area of management education (e.g., Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014) and their observation of

similar phenomena, I may have been carried away by the inspiring dynamic of being in cahoots with (some of) my (co-) learners. Obviously, there was a need to reflect further on what theoretical approaches might help explain and overcome this dichotomy and my apparent insufficient realization of its existence and significance.

Reflection: Out-Groups in Leader-Member-Exchange Theory

This section will draw from my fields of expertise – leadership studies and adult education – to help make sense of the experience described above and engage in a more detailed reflection in retrospective (“reflection-on-action”; Schön, 1983). In the context of leadership studies Graen and Uhl-Bien’s (1995) Leader-Member-Exchange Theory (LMX) as also discussed intensively in Northouse (2015) appears applicable and helpful. The theory describes the relations between leaders and their followers (“members”) as the core of the leadership process to explain and predict leadership effectiveness. However, its particular focus on the quantity and quality of relations between leaders and their followers and on the resulting phenomena of “in-groups” and “out-groups” also appears relevant to the challenges I was experiencing in my course and applicable to similar cases in other areas of learning; results of the LMX theory may shed light on the relations between the learning facilitator (“leader”) and learners (“members”). In regard to adult education, Fornaciari and Lund Dean’s (2014) discussion of “the syllabus of the 21st century” is of particular significance when reflecting on how to move towards a more adult learner oriented approach by building engaging reciprocal relationships with (co-) learners.

Dyadic Relationship(s)

The LMX theory was the first leadership theory shifting the focus from the leader to the relations between the leader and each of the followers. Researchers studied and described the variety of “dyadic relationships” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Northouse, 2015) between leaders and their followers; in particular, this approach highlighted the differences that might exist between those relations between a leader and their various followers and the impact these differences might have on leadership and its outcomes. Researchers studied the “linkages leaders formed with each of their followers” (Northouse, 2015, p. 137). They found that leaders demonstrated differences in terms of how (quality of relations) and how often (frequency of relations) they related to different followers. In particular, they discovered two distinct kinds of different relations: relations to some followers were “*expanded*” and *frequent* whereas relations to others were “*formal*” and *limited* to a minimal number of exchanges.

Similarly, as learning facilitators we do entertain different relationships with the various learners (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014). Within the variety of different relationships with learners I experienced in my course, two different kinds became apparent: frequent and rich conversations with some learners and communicating much less frequently and having more basic exchanges with others.

In-Groups and Out-Groups

As indicated, “researchers found two general types of linkages (or relationships): those that were based on expanded and negotiated role responsibilities (extra-roles), which were called the *in-group*, and those that were based on the formal employment contract (defined roles), which were called the *out-group*” (Northouse, 2015, p. 137). Differences in personality, in the quality of interpersonal cooperation, and in particular, in the degree to which “followers involve themselves in expanding their role responsibilities with the leader” (Northouse, 2015, p. 137) affected whether or not members became part of the in-group or out-group. Engaged employees who were interested in taking on more or different kind of work and special assignments (re-) negotiated their roles, involvement and assignments and became part of the in-group based on more frequent and expanded conversations with their

leaders. Employees who were satisfied with the predetermined roles and assignments became part of the out-group based on minimal exchanges with their leaders.

Equally, learners who are particularly interested in the learning experiences offered in the course engage in (re-) negotiating opportunities and assignments to better suit their individual needs. As suggested by Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2014), “collaboration serves to bring students into the process” (p. 711). Thus, in a collaborative course environment learners converse with the learning facilitators more frequently and more extensively. They become part of the facilitators’ (or course’s) in-group. Learners who are satisfied with the generic approach to learning and assessment as clearly specified in the syllabus may not see the need to engage in additional individual conversations with their learning facilitator and become part of the out-group.

This might also explain to a large extent the polarized feedback I received from learners in my course: those who engaged above and beyond the “default approach” and consequently had become part of the in-group were likely raving about the degree of flexibility and self-directedness in the course; however, members of the out-group who could (and based on their choices and results maybe should) have been satisfied with the status quo and their opportunity to achieve full course success (e.g., in terms of potentially receiving an A+ if they excel in their given assignments) might have felt excluded and they may have feared to lose out on course opportunities based on their perceived status in class or on their perceived lesser relationships with their learning facilitator.

Rethinking: Overcoming Out-Groups through Leader Relations and Leadership Making

This section will discuss and demonstrate how rethinking and reshaping the leader-member relations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) can inform leadership – and by extension learner – development and help overcome the buildup of out-groups. First, I will describe how “leader relations” (Northouse, 2015) can be characterized both in in-groups and in out-groups. Second, I will discuss how the “in-group”-“out-group”-dichotomy may be overcome by “leadership making” (Northouse, 2015). In both sections, I will include reflections on how the leadership related observations and interpretations might be applied to learning in general and to the context of my course in particular; these reflections again will be based on respective suggestions drawn from Fornaciari and Lund Dean’s (2014) recent reflections on adult learning in the context of management education.

Leader Relations

According to Northouse (2015) leader relations can be characterized by the *responsibilities* that followers have or that are assigned by their leader, by the kind of *engagement* that describes the dyadic relationship between a leader and their follower, and by the nature of the *relations* themselves. Similarly, Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2014) discuss how the changing roles of learners in an adult learner oriented approach indicate the changing relations between learners and the learning facilitator.

Responsibilities

While in out-groups responsibilities of followers (often assigned to them) tend to be *limited*, followers in in-groups often are *expanded* (Northouse, 2015). In RCLP 4002 the course syllabus assigns a clear set of limited responsibilities to those learners who opt for the “default approach” (Mengel, 2015). More self-directed learners tend to expand their responsibilities by choosing optional learning opportunities including their own start-up organizations (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014). As a result the former group of learners with a minimalistic approach and satisfied with responsibilities assigned to them by the

syllabus tend to find themselves in the out-group while the latter group of self-directed learners opt for expanded responsibilities and tend to become members of the in-group.

Engagement

In many cases the engagement of out-group members is characterized by *contractual agreements* underlying the leader relations. In-group members, however, tend to *negotiate* their engagement level (Northouse, 2015). In the RCLP 4002 course context, those who are content with the level of engagement as specified in the syllabus by the “default approach” do not see the need to go beyond what the syllabus as a contract (Fornaciari & Lund-Dean, 2014) has to offer them; that again characterizes them as members of the out-group. More self-directed learners, however, are interested in negotiating their engagement more flexibly and in a way that may better suit their own learning interests and needs; thus, their higher level of negotiated engagement places them in the in-group.

Relations

Relations of out-group members with their leaders tend to be rather *formal* whereas the relationships between in-group members and their leaders are based on mutual *trust* (Northouse, 2015). Further, “trust and mutually crafted respect are key components [of adult learning]” (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014, p. 719). Learners in RCLP 4002 who choose the “default approach” by definition rely on the specifics as detailed in the syllabus and accompanying documents; they are members of the out-group because they don’t see the need and thus are not ready to go beyond what is already formally declared and defined (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014). Self-directed learners want to and need to intensify the relationships with me as their learning facilitator and as a result we build the trust that characterizes the relations of in-group members with their leader.

Leadership Making

As per Northouse (2015), “organizations stand to gain much from having leaders who can create good working relationships. When leaders and followers have good exchanges, they feel better and accomplish more, and the organization prospers” (p. 141). By extension, learning facilitators who have better exchanges and relationships with learners will likely contribute to creating better learning environments and to more effectively achieving learning outcomes. After all, learning facilitators even in an adult learner centered approach do “have professional responsibilities to create courses where learning outcomes have been defined and well-considered” (p. 719); learning facilitators need to be prepared for this enhanced role of participatory facilitation. Hence, “leadership making” (Northouse, 2015; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) may help develop better exchanges both between leaders and followers in the workplace and between learning facilitators and learners in various learning environments.

In an increasingly reciprocal partnership relationship leaders move from relying on limited *responsibilities* in narrowly defined roles to developing expanded role descriptions and sets of responsibilities. Furthermore, leaders who are better able to engage their followers will also be able to move from a contractually agreed *engagement* to a richer and more effective negotiated engagement. Finally, advanced leadership includes reciprocal relations with followers that are built on *trust* rather than relying only on formal agreements (Northouse, 2015).

This approach can fruitfully be applied to our own development as leaders in learning environments and our own growth as effective educators. It can also effectively be applied to developing learners to demonstrate leadership for themselves and for others; this is of particular relevance for – but by no means limited to – the context of courses that include leadership related learning outcomes.

Rather than simply describing how and why in-groups and out-groups may develop or exist, the leadership making approach can help rethink course design. Syllabus design and pedagogical approaches that consider leadership making in particular and the LMX theory in general can suggest in detail how to encourage all learners to expand their responsibilities, to engage in further negotiations about their level of engagement, and to intensify their relations with the learning facilitator that allow for the creation of trust as the basis of their relations with learning facilitators (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014). As a consequence, the borderline between out-groups and in-groups may be broken up by continuing to offer expanded responsibilities, negotiated levels of engagement, and relations built on trust to members who initially tend to place themselves (or are by design placed) into out-groups and thus help them move into in-groups also.

Conclusive Recommendations: Mitigating the Side Effect of Out-Groups

We know that learners in general and adult learners or millennial learners in particular want to be engaged in their learning at various degrees and they also want their input in the learning process to count (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014; Mengel, 2010). Hence, most learning facilitators will likely aim for increased engagement of their learners; they will want to go in cahoots with (co-) learners. However, as also suggested by the literature (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014), by my own case of RCLP 4002, and also by comments from colleagues at various conferences and meetings: not all learners will follow us at the same level of engagement. This may result in the unintended side effect of out-groups and in-groups in our courses.

The leadership theory of LMX and adult learning theories help describe *what* is going on when we go in cahoots with learners and when we experience the unwanted side effect of out-groups. Further, concepts and terms of those theories help explain the *so what?*—what it might mean—in the context of collaborative learning. Finally and most importantly, these theories also offer responses to the *what-now?*-question; they provide suggestions on how to avoid, overcome, or mitigate this unwanted side effect.

The following recommendations draw from our previous work on social entrepreneurship education (Mengel, Tantawy, & McNally, 2016), from adult learner theory (Fornaciari & Lund Dean, 2014), and they particularly summarize some of suggestions resulting from our discussion of leadership theory (Northouse, 2015; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). They will be presented in a way that can easily be understood and applied in fields outside of leadership or social entrepreneurship education and that may in fact be helpful for educators working in any field that does benefit from going in cahoots with learners:

1. When going in cahoots with learners be prepared that there may be side effects and unintended polarizations or even exclusions; some learners may not want to follow you at full speed or they may choose to engage at a lower level. Hence, going in cahoots with learners may result in out-groups (less engaged learners) and in-groups (more engaged learners). “Reflective practice” both immediately while you are “in-action” and also “on-action” (Schön, 1983; Bolton, 2014) after the course is over may help you make sense of what you experience in the light of comparable experiences and of available literature. Further, it will allow you to immediately address issues detected. Finally, it will enrich your own learning and enable you to redesign courses accordingly and to be better prepared to address similar issues when they come up in the future.

2. Intentionally (re-) designing the learning opportunities to include (self-) leadership development opportunities at various levels and including respective learning outcomes may help address the side effect of out-groups; while some learners may be ready to fully engage early on, others may need to be brought up to speed. Adult learner oriented syllabi, classroom design, and learning strategies may overcome potential shortcomings of pedagogical strategies that often focus on young and less mature learners. Thus, treating all learners as co-learners at some level may help mitigate the development of out-groups without relinquishing our responsibilities as learning facilitators.
3. Out-groups and in-groups can be bridged by intentionally offering appropriate additional engagement opportunities to out-group members also. In particular, out-group members might be interested in taking on expanded responsibilities that still are within their comfort zone. Further, offering out-group members appropriate additional opportunities will per se engage them in negotiations that enrich their relationships with the learning facilitator. Finally, enriched relationships with the learning facilitator allow for the development of trust and may lead to more reciprocal relationships also. Clearly, however, any interventions intended to bridge the development of in-groups and out-groups may not affect learners who choose to be less engaged and who are satisfied with their achieved level of learning success.

In conclusion, the more we succeed in overcoming the temptation to over-engage with the already engaged learners and in engaging more with the under-engaged learners the higher the probability to avoid the development of polarized out-groups and in-groups in our learning environments. Existing divisions and potential exclusions by going in cahoots can be overcome by offering appropriate development opportunities for those who for whatever reason stand on or are left on the sidelines. Our continuing and intentional attempts to reflect on our practice and to address, invite and encourage less engaged learners in ways they are comfortable with will enrich our relationships with those learners and thus offer them appropriate opportunities and chances to make their way into existing in-groups, to join us when going in cahoots, and to become true co-learners.

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Shakespeare in Local High Schools: The Pedagogy of Performance and the Performance of Pedagogy

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Abstract

Although student engagement with and understanding of course material can increase with experiential learning, sometimes a complete experiential or co-op course is too much organization and too great a leap for both student and teacher. In this report, I discuss the incorporation of a component of experiential learning in two upper level English courses which connects students with the larger off-campus community; students take material learned in class and as a final project they perform or teach it in local high school classrooms. In the two courses discussed here, students are able to engage closely and personally with Shakespearean texts in ways they do not in a regular classroom. While feedback has indicated that my students sometimes felt that it was “a little terrifying at times” because of the “completely different learning curve,” they were also “excited,” and the experience was “fun” and “invaluable.” Interestingly, I felt exactly the same way!

Keywords: experiential; engagement; assessment; Shakespeare

You may have heard the old proverb “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.” You probably know its pedagogical equivalent: “teach students content, and they can successfully write a test; teach them to learn, and students can grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, creatively, for the rest of their life.” I just made that up, but we all do want our students to make meaningful use of their education, and experiential learning—the engagement of students in the learning experience, in the making of and reflecting on and application of knowledge—is certainly one way to reach this goal.

Simon Fraser University's Teaching and Learning Centre website provides a useful definition of experiential learning (2012): experiential learning is “the strategic, active engagement of students in opportunities to learn through doing, and reflection on those activities, which empowers them to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical endeavours in a multitude of settings inside and outside of the classroom.” This definition covers three main components or stages: opportunities to learn through doing; reflection on those activities; and, application inside and outside the classroom. Experiential learning—and community-based learning or service-learning—is perhaps not unusual in a number of disciplines such as Sociology, Nursing, or Business, and in some disciplines whole courses are shaped by or dedicated to a service-learning or a co-op experience. This is, however, unusual for the discipline of English. Perhaps this is because developing a course whose focus is this kind of experiential learning demands a huge organizational challenge, besides a re-thinking of what exactly it is we want our students to be learning. If coverage of a certain breadth of course content is paramount, this approach

can be impossible. However, if the educational focus can shift to a deeper coverage of a smaller amount of content, experiential learning is much more advantageous.

Incorporating an Experiential Component

My regular English classes generally incorporate the first of the three components in the Simon Fraser definition—opportunities to learn through doing, inside the classroom and through assignments. Generally English provides a lot of opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills learned in class in various, fairly traditional assessment techniques, such as essays, seminars and presentations, group projects, tests, and the occasional creative assignment. Including assignments that deal with reflection on the learning process is less common, and application of students' knowledge outside of the classroom, as part of the course, is less common still. It is useful to change the routine of my students' learning. By the time they are in their third and fourth years, my students are used to reading and talking about literary texts in a classroom setting, in writing papers, in doing research, and even in presenting to their peers.

I decided to design a couple of upper level English courses with a learning component outside of the classroom for a number of reasons: I wanted my students to really understand that the skills and knowledge they were developing in the classroom were—dare I say it—useful, and I needed them to understand that not just intellectually, but practically. I needed them to embody the experience. For the students, the awareness that they would need to share their knowledge outside of the classroom—and that they would be in control of that experience—really worked to focus their attention on what and how they learned in the classroom. They would learn differently, and show their learning differently.

Both of the courses for which I have built an experiential component focus on Shakespeare. My other, “regular,” in-class-only Shakespeare courses focus on breadth: we examine seven plays in some detail, in their historical, political, social, and larger literary and dramatic contexts. In my two experiential Shakespeare courses, the focus is narrowed: we study two plays, in depth, and the final project requires students to teach or perform material to high school students in high school classrooms. My students come to an understanding of Shakespeare not just in the classroom, but also in the community. Knowing that they will need to share their knowledge with people who are not their peers, outside the course, creates a much more immediate and energized connection with the material.

I considered what kind of community connections I had that could be harnessed, and what kind of organization I would need to do to oversee the students' experiences. I had a strong connection with the local Saint John Theatre Company, where I am a Board Member and an active participant as an actor, director, and playwright. I also know a number of local high school teachers; I am on the theatre company's Education Committee, and so have contact with high schools that way, but over the years I have been invited into many high school classrooms to talk about Shakespeare. It did not take long for me to receive some very enthusiastic responses when I broached the idea of bringing university students into the theatre space and into local high school classrooms. The two courses I developed take advantage of these opportunities: “Shakespeare and Pedagogy” requires students to teach material from Shakespeare's plays in high school classrooms, and “Script into Performance” sees them perform scenes and monologues both in high school classrooms and at the theatre company for a general audience.

Planning for the Unplanned

There is a lot of initial planning necessary in order to include an experiential opportunity for my students; high school teachers need to be contacted, schedules coordinated, and classroom visits arranged. To prepare students for the final project in the community, they spend most of the term developing their knowledge and practicing their skills. The “Shakespeare and Pedagogy” students present two “simulated” lessons to their peers in the classroom, and the “Script into Performance” students study and perform their material in the theatre space. All of this planning and practice—with feedback from both myself and their peers—helps to mitigate the stress students feel about their final projects. In the end, presenting what they know in public is a lot different than simulating the situation in the university classroom, or limiting the audience to their classmates.

Despite all the planning, there are a lot of stresses that arise from unplanned happenings and situations I could not regulate. High school teachers are not always in control of their schedules; classes are rescheduled with very little notice to make room for school assemblies or meetings. Sometimes they don't have access to (shared) books as early as they thought they would, or students progress more slowly through material—they mean to be on Act 3 of *Macbeth* by the end of March, but they are only at Act 1. And sometimes classroom technology does not work. Thus it is absolutely essential that my students and I are flexible (and this can be very stressful for everyone).

Students' final presentations in both courses revealed much improvement from their initial forays into teaching and performance. In “Shakespeare and Pedagogy,” students learned to focus on their audience; instead of creating lessons that mainly showed their understanding of Shakespearean scholarship (as they would do for a seminar in a traditional academic class), they learned to focus discussions in accessible and creative ways for a high school audience, and to respond rather than simply present. In “Script into Performance,” students made huge strides in their confidence and their ability to interpret the play and convey that interpretation to an audience; they moved from initial nervous self-consciousness to comfort with themselves, each other, and the Shakespearean text. Most of all, students wanted to improve not simply to get a good grade, but to be able to reach their audiences, and to learn more about the material and themselves.

In these courses, as in life, learning is the result both of what is planned and what is unplanned. The unplanned experiences generate what David Megginson (1994) calls “emergent” (29) learning, which demands responsive learners. Megginson discusses both planned and emergent learners: those who can look ahead, and those who learn on the spot (or those who can do both or neither). My classes attempt to develop students who able to do both: to build the sense that planning is important, and that it provides the foundation—the ability—to revise and replan on the spot, and to gather strength from what you know you know, to do what you have to do. Also, we need to recognize that there is no end-point to learning, because plan how we will, there is always difference and change; we need to be adaptable, flexible, active, and reactive. The very instability of the experiential components provides the necessary learning environment.

Student Responses

Just as it was useful for students to learn differently, it was very useful for me to teach differently. I demanded that my students be flexible, so I had to be, too. I was fairly nervous when first delivering these courses. I was not, for instance, covering much content, not in the way I usually think about content. And I do not have a degree in theatre, or in education. Would my knowledge of Shakespeare, and my skills in planning and in emergent learning—both learned through my own experiences of

education and theatre—be enough? I was very interested in the feedback I received, mainly through the reflective journals the students wrote weekly.

I learned that the risks for the students were high, but that the rewards were also. A number of comments ran along the same lines: “I am nervous and overwhelmed to a certain degree, but I am above everything else excited”; “it was enlightening and a little terrifying at times, but a huge amount of fun!”; “Overall, this experience has been a completely different learning curve than what I am used to, but has been invaluable to my continued education.” These comments very much reflect my own experiences in these courses.

Sometimes the responses were about the content of the course, and about expanded approaches to Shakespeare; one student—who had previously taken one of my traditional Shakespeare classes—noted, “At the start of the semester, I saw Shakespeare’s works in the same way I see novels: exclusively text-bound. [...] After performing just these two pieces and seeing the work of my classmates, however, it suddenly seems like I’m seeing the plays in a whole new way for the first time.” Many of the comments had a broader focus, about their own growth as learners and as human beings. I can only wish a traditional classroom could generate such reflections. One student, who had never taken a Shakespeare class before, said, “I looked forward to Monday nights to see my new friends and challenge myself by seeing how much further I could come out of my shell to interact in the exercises and with the class. The class taught me more than any other class I have taken in University, it taught me how to just be confident and comfortable with myself and who cares what others think.” Another, reflecting on the high school visit, looked beyond assessment to learning itself: “Ultimately we could have done better, but I have also been discovering throughout this class that one can always do better and should always be striving to do better.”

These experiential components demand not only the accumulation of knowledge, but that students put that knowledge into practice—inside and outside the classroom—and reflect on the overall learning experience. The result was a much broader, more rounded understanding not just of Shakespeare, but of learning itself. As one high school teacher summarized, “It was a win-win-win-win. Your students had the opportunity to put their learning into action, my students heard new thoughts from young voices, and you and I got to sit back and be the proud mamas for a change.”

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Using Collaborative Conversation and Metaphor to Enhance Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper explores the theoretical framework for collaboration as well as the background to a collaboration that has taken place over a number of years. It also includes a description of an interactive session that we undertook at the 2016 Association of Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase *In Cahoots: Building Community To Get It Done* at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John. The session began and ended with activities that calmed and focused the minds of participants. During the session the presenters utilised the concept of 'collaborative conversation' to explore participants' metaphors for the teaching and learning relationship. In addition, in order to gain an understanding of the importance of relationship building, as we move to nurturing collaborative relationships in our teaching practices, participants engaged in a 'circle of trust', which highlighted the underlying biases we all possess. Finally, there was a large group discussion that explored our collaborative conversation as we learned, unlearned and relearned about our biases and assumptions of the teaching and learning process and the resulting implications for our teaching practices.

Key words: collaboration; higher education; collaborative conversations; metaphors; international collaboration

Introduction

Faced with the complex global realities and challenged by increasingly diverse student populations and the ongoing evolutions of technology, many educators find themselves under a constant pressure to redefine teaching and learning and to explore innovative ways to provide their students with knowledge, skills and understandings needed in a global society. As a result, 'bottom-up, or grassroots, collaborations' (Starke-Meyerring, Duin, & Palvetzian, 2007) are becoming increasingly popular among educators. Educators in higher educational institutions develop grassroots partnerships across institutional and global boundaries in order to co-research, co-design, co-develop and co-teach. Faculty-driven learning environments often use technology to link students to their peers in diverse contexts, challenging them to negotiate and build shared knowledge across traditional boundaries (Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008). Grassroots collaborative partnerships are one of the most effective ways to "engage students and faculty in shared learning environments, research projects, and civic engagement initiatives that allow all participants to learn from each other, develop global literacies, and benefit from their engagement equally" (Starke-Meyerring, Duin, & Palvetzian, 2007, p. 148). In addition, a growing

number of studies in higher education report on faculty initiatives to collaborate, as well as on the nuances of various collaborative partnerships (Boehm, Kurthen, & Aniola-Jedrezerek, 2010; Little, Titarenko, & Bergenson, 2005; Herrington & Tretyakov, 2005; Patterson, Carrillo, & Salinas, 2012; Starke-Meyerring, 2010; Starke-Meyerring & Andrews, 2006; Starke-Meyerring, Duin, & Palvetzian, 2007; and Starke-Meyerring & Wilson, 2008).

There are various definitions of collaboration (Friend & Cook, 1990; Wood & Gray, 1991) but the one that is commonly accepted is by Friend and Cook who describe collaboration as “a style for interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (1990, p. 72). The commitment to collaboration from the partners and stakeholders as Sosin and Parham (2001) acknowledge “leads to learning together, the development of mutual respect, trust and need to take the actions to sustain the relationships” (p. 110). Friend and Cook (1990) identify the six necessary conditions for collaboration as follows: “(a) a mutual goal, (b) parity among participants, (c) shared participation, (d) shared accountability, (e) shared resources and (f) voluntariness” (p. 72). In addition, a strong awareness of the “parameters of collaboration” can assist members of the team to develop the best possible solutions (Mostert, 1996).

San Martin-Rodriguez, Beaulieu, D'Amour, and Ferrada-Videla (2005) note that there are three categories that influence collaboration and determine whether it will be successful or not: systemic factors, organizational factors, and interactional factors. Systemic determinants are “elements outside the organization, such as components of social, cultural, educational and professional systems” (p. 134). Organizational determinants “combine attributes of the organization that define the work environment of the team, such as its structure and philosophy, team resources and administrative support, as well as communication and coordination mechanisms” (p. 138). Interactional determinants are “components of interpersonal relationships among team members, such as their willingness to collaborate and the existence of mutual trust, respect and communication” (p. 141). They conclude that, while all three categories are important, as collaboration is “essentially an interpersonal process” (p. 145), interpersonal determinants play a key role in successful collaboration.

At a personal level, collaborations involve each participant's philosophies, values, beliefs and traits. Some researchers believe that collaboration is an attitude, not an activity while others view it as existing on a continuum of skills. According to Robb and Cronin (2001), participants of a collaborative process often “revealed and critiqued their basic philosophical assumptions about pedagogy, peer relationships and the ways we carry out the day-to-day activities in our professional academic lives” (p. 129). Partners often highlight that “individual change in the process of collaborative interaction is the most important result of working together” (Freedman & Salmon, 2001, p. 180).

Strengths and Challenges of Collaboration

Collaboration can offer something few other strategies can: a means through which to move beyond one's own constraints—whether personal, epistemological, or professional—and to see the world through a different lens. In collaborative partnerships “the journey is at least equally important as the destination” (Russell & Flynn, 2000, p. 203) and learning to work within a collaborative environment can encourage new approaches to complex issues in teaching. As noted by David (2009), “Collaborative inquiry is among the most promising strategies for strengthening teaching and learning. At the same time, it may be one of the most difficult to implement” (p. 88).

Despite the many benefits of collaborative partnerships, they are not without their challenges. Ledoux and McHenry (2008) highlight the ‘pitfalls’ of collaborative partnerships conceptual barriers (barriers in

the way roles are perceived), pragmatic barriers (in logistics, timing, school environment), or professional barriers (conflict between professionals with different bodies of knowledge/epistemologies). These challenges to collaborative partnerships are not insurmountable but careful attention to them is necessary if partners want to make collaboration an effective approach to teaching and learning. Mindful consideration of the challenges of collaboration and proactive measures to address them will help mitigate any pitfalls to both collaborative skill development and practice resulting in innovative approaches to addressing existing issues.

Ultimately, when participating in collaborative ventures, participants must feel that the potential for a positive impact outweigh the negatives, whether those negatives involve the blurring of professional boundaries, scheduling difficulties, or the sense that nothing is happening (Freeth, 2001, p. 44). Ledoux and McHenry (2008) argue that clear communication and preparatory guidelines are necessary; communication is key (e.g., each party should be clear about their expectations and what is being offered); and, should be open and willing to learn from not only the positive experiences but from the negative ones as well. Several researchers note that, despite the increasing call for collaboration, few educators receive training in effective collaboration, teamwork, or facilitating collaboration process (Huebner & Gould, 1991; D'Amour, Ferrada-Videla, San Martin-Rodriguez, & Beaulieu, 2005; Demchak, 1995). Ogletree, Bull, Drew, and Lunnen (2005) write that "there have been few organized efforts to prepare professionals and others to serve as team members" (p. 138); this lack of training can function to make collaboration less effective.

Collaborative Conversations and Metaphors (Overview of our 'In Cahoots' session)

Oliver and Gershman (1989) reminds us that "We are at the end of an age, so that's its metaphors and symbols no longer explain where we have been nor inform us what to do next" (p. 7). With that in mind, in my teacher education classes I tend toward a metaphor for the teaching and learning relationship, which is seemingly simple, but which upon further investigation is deep. It promotes both immediate understanding and deeper ongoing awareness of the complexity of the teaching and learning relationship, curriculum, *and* collaboration. I use the metaphor of the conversation. A conversation can occur anywhere, any time. A conversation can be internal, within ourselves, or it can engage single or multiple others. A conversation can be a one-off or ongoing. It can occur between a person, or people, and the contexts they inhabit, through their emotions, senses, feelings, memories, and reflections, or through their physical engagement. A conversation can restore the spirit and nourish the soul. Last but not least, a conversation can occur between a person, or group of people, and a text including a curriculum text. Necessarily then, in a conversation, teaching and learning is a reciprocal and holistic relationship. I should note that my use of the word 'texts' should be understood to potentially include written, oral, and visual sources including, but not limited to: paintings, drawings, cartoons, music, dance, poetry, song, photos, photo essays, video, audio, blogs, wikis, and other digital media and archives as well as books, articles, and other written forms. 'Collaboration' is inherent in this metaphor, in the commonly accepted understanding of collaborating with other people, however it also inherent through the notion of collaboration *through* our whole being and *with* the contexts and relationships we are embedded in—this may be seen as a spiritual collaboration.

Once a student has described their metaphor, I ask them to reflect on and consider 'where is the teacher, where is the student, where is the content, where is the context, where is the curriculum making in your metaphor?' These are the 'commonplaces' described by Schwab (Westbury & Wilkof, 1978) and further explained by Null (2011). We explore these questions as a community of praxis in relation to *each* of their metaphors. Following Schwab, I ask these questions and highlight these commonplaces because:

These commonplaces are powerful because each is accepted as a true part of any good curriculum. [...] and] failure to consider any one of these factors will lead to an incomplete, ineffective curriculum. The challenge [...] is to balance these commonplaces while at the same time avoiding the trap of thinking that any one of them is sufficient, by itself, to make a good curriculum. (Null, 2011, p. 26)

Asking my students to connect their metaphor to these commonplaces encourages deeper thinking, the development of connections, and promotes the realization that the teaching and learning relationship, curriculum, and life are one (Schubert, 1994; Slattey, 2013). Exploring these commonplaces is an exercise in collaboration and an exercise in seeing the collaborations in curriculum.

At its heart all learning is physiological (Crowell, Caine, & Caine, 1998; Crowell & Reid-Marr, 2012). Our 'In Cahoots' session began with an activity to calm and focus the minds of the participants as well as introduce the concept that we all exist within a framework of nested contexts. This activity consisted of a short vipassana meditation (focused on the breath). James notes the aim of vipassana meditation is "[...] clarity and total action in each moment" (1992, p. 4) and Miller says "deeply focussed attention is the mode where we function most effectively in our work" (2014, p. 5). This was followed by a 'loving-kindness' meditation, which centers the session, focuses attention, brings the group together as a whole community, and reconnects each person to the interconnected and interrelated nature of life. Dr. Collister has used two different loving-kindness meditations previously. The first focused on giving loving-kindness by moving outward from the individual geographically (the individual, people in the room, in the building, in the town, in the Province, in the country, everywhere) (based on Miller, 2014, p. 83). The second focused on giving loving-kindness to actual people who are progressively more emotionally distant from the individual (the individual, their beloved, their friend, someone they feel neutral about, someone they have difficulty with, everyone) (based on Chödrön, 2002, p. 130).

These meditations were followed by a physical activity that required everyone to stand and find a partner. Each pair stand facing each other with their hands up in front (like they were going to push a door with two hands). The pair stood 2-3 feet away from each other with just their fingertips touching. Each pair decides who will lead there after there is no talking. Looking directly into each other's eyes the person who is leading starts to move their hands in whatever motion they feel like, the other person remains in sync their fingertips never leaving those of the person who is leading. This is an exercise in non-verbal communication and connection. After a few minutes the lead could alternate to the other person (or not). Next the same exercise was undertaken but this time with both people's eyes closed. This is an exercise in physiological connection and non-verbal communication. After a few minutes the lead could alternate to the other person (or not). Next the same exercise was undertaken, both people's eyes were still closed but this time the person who was leading was not only moving their hands but they moved their whole body including their feet. This was an exercise in physiological connection and non-verbal communication and TRUST. After a few minutes the lead could alternate to the other person (or not). The exercise was followed by a few moments of reflection and a debrief on what the participants felt, and what their emotions were. The meditations beforehand, seemed to set up the participants for a deeper experience. The purpose of this activity was twofold: Firstly, to allow the participants to practice contemplation in a supportive community; and secondly, to foster a calmness and focus at the beginning of the session.

Both the meditations and the standing/moving activity provided an opportunity for participants to engage in activities that foster empathy and collaboration. The purpose of these activities was to facilitate the participant's ability to explore who they are, how they exist in the world, and the effects of

their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours on the relationships and contexts within which they are situated. The remainder of the session was a discussion based in ‘collaborative conversation’ and ‘circles of trust’.

Collaborative conversations are based on the understanding that no single “person can set themselves up as an external authority who defines the nature of internal authority for other people” (Heron, 1996, p. 50). They are used to co-create a deeper understanding of theories, practices, and reflections through the act, and experience of, collaboration. ‘Circles of Trust’ are rooted in the notion that, as Palmer (2004) says, “we all have an inner teacher” and “[...] we all need other people to invite, amplify and help us discern the inner teacher’s voice” (pp. 24-25). The purpose of the circle is to allow each member of the classroom community to provide a reflection that is based on their experience that makes, or reinforces, connections to the concepts being discussed. Each person’s contribution is typically followed by a short period of silence to allow everyone to reflect on what had been said.

These meditations and activities are a way to begin to allow the partners in a collaboration to get to know themselves and to begin to develop relationships with others. This is an important part of establishing trust and respect for all the members of the collaboration.

Virtual Collaboration

Our own collaboration as presenters and writers began with a call for online participants in a study on international conversations with educators. Dr. Collister describes our journey based on his participation in our many collaborations.

My work, is in teacher education, holistic approaches to teaching and learning, and curriculum. I have worked in two separate five-year combined Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education programmes, a two-year Bachelor of Education programme (for those with another undergraduate degree), a two-year Master of Teaching programme (for those with an undergraduate degree, but no teaching qualification), and, a number of two-year Master of Education programmes (for those who are already qualified teachers). This work has occurred in seven different institutions, three of them multiple times, located in five different Canadian provinces. My teaching has been face-to-face, blended (face-to-face with a significant online component—in various configurations), and fully online. I have also significant experience of teacher education (both initial and ongoing) in vocational contexts including in two private colleges, a number of professional workplaces, and a university; work that I undertook in Australia before migrating to Canada.

People like me are often called contract, adjunct, or sessional instructors or professors, depending on where we live, the kind of institution and/or programme we work in, and the local faculty agreement. However, I prefer the nomenclature, and metaphor, of a ‘Journeyman’ Professor, since I often feel like a wanderer, qualified and skilled, and hopefully, passing my experience, knowledge, and skills on to others. Just as Journeymen of old, I move around the province or country as the work becomes available. As such, I’m gaining experience, both positive and negative, in different institutions and contexts. Experience, which my friend and colleague, Dr. Tom Poetter, echoing Schubert (1994), would describe as ‘curricular’ since “life is a course, a curriculum, that bears analysis at all times” (personal communication, 2016). An idea that is in harmony with my philosophy of teaching and learning, which includes the idea that: “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s there are few” (Master Suzuki Roshi cited in Chödrön, 2002, p. 1) and the idea that:

A man [sic] who says he knows is already dead. But the man [sic] who thinks "I do not know," who is discovering, finding out, who is not seeking an end, not thinking in terms of arriving or becoming—such a man is living and that living is truth. (Krishnamurti, 2000, p. 8).

I first became involved with Dr. Harkins and Ms. Barchuk in late 2011 or early 2012 when I was teaching into the concurrent Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education programme at the University of Winnipeg. I had received an email asking professors who were involved in teacher education to participate in a survey and subsequently a focus group. In 2013, I was again reunited with Dr. Harkins and Ms. Barchuk when they asked me to contribute to their presentation at the 17th Annual Dalhousie Conference on University Teaching and Learning: Internationalising teaching and learning in a global context, at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Unfortunately, I was attending a different conference in Ottawa, Ontario at the time, so in order to participate with Dr. Harkins and Ms. Barchuk I used Skype to join in their session remotely. Since my segment revolved around incorporating technology in education this seemed appropriate. In addition, I included in my portion of the presentation, three previously digitally-recorded vignettes exploring the work of colleagues of mine who each used technology in unique ways to engage their students at a college in downtown Toronto.

Later in 2013, Dr. Harkins and Ms. Barchuk asked me to present a guest lecture, remotely using Skype, simultaneously to faculty and students at Mount Saint Vincent University, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada and Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. This session was again on the broad subject of incorporating technology in education. It seemed appropriate as this session was part of Dr. Harkins' and Ms. Barchuk's international work.

In (2014), again with one of my college professor colleagues, I published a chapter in Dr. Harkins' and Ms. Barchuk's e-book 'International Conversations of Teacher Educators: Teaching in a Global World', entitled: The context of teaching, meaningful work, and engagement in direct knowledge of the world (Hamilton & Collister, 2014). This was followed in 2015 for the 2nd iteration of this e-book, 'International conversations with teacher educators: Collaborations in education', entitled: Reflections on collaboration: Perspectives and practices (Bailey, Eliuk, Miladinovic, & Collister, anticipated 2017). I co-wrote this chapter with three of my former University of Winnipeg students bringing, in some respects this diverse collaborative journey full circle. Although my collaboration with Dr. Harkins and Ms. Barchuk didn't end there in 2016 I was asked to join them in co-editing the 2nd volume of their e-book (to be published in 2017). This gave me an opportunity to expand the call for chapters to my networks in the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as my colleagues networks in Canada and the Caribbean. Finally, in 2016 I presented the workshop described above, on our collective behalf, at the 'Association of Atlantic Universities Teaching Showcase: In Cahoots Building Communities To Get It Done' conference, in St John, New Brunswick, Canada. Ours is a virtual collaboration initiated by a common interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning and has many of the characteristics of grassroots collaborations.

Grassroots Collaborations

Florida (2006) encourages educators, administrators, and policymakers to amplify university's powerful role in "generating, attracting, and mobilizing talent, and in establishing a tolerant social climate—that is open, diverse, meritocratic and proactively inclusive of new people and new ideas" (p. 86). Greater efforts are needed to adapt, thrive, and innovate within the quickly changing educational landscapes of the global age, encouraging educators to develop collaborations "as an effective tool to respond to the pressures of globalization..." (Luijten-Lub, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2005, p. 150). According to

Marginson (2007), the treatment of education as a consumer good has already led to a significant decrease of public funding which increased dependence on private sources, such as student tuition fees and corporate sponsored research. In addition, the influence of economic globalization on education has also resulted in a considerable shift in the conception and value of academic labour (Olssen & Peters, 2005). This shift, evident in a decrease of tenure and tenure-track professorial positions being created, and being replaced by cheaper part-time and adjunct instructors (Berger & Ricci, 2011; Nelson, 2010), has implications for how faculty can develop innovative learning environments, and which faculty are able to do so.

Starke-Meyerring and Wilson (2008) emphasize the importance of exploring experiences of faculty who have been initiating and developing collaborative partnerships to position themselves and their students as active participants in shaping global educational landscapes. These grassroots collaborative partnerships extend beyond the limits of traditional local classrooms as they link students, instructors, professionals, experts, and communities from diverse contexts and challenge all participants to negotiate and build shared learning and knowledge cultures across diverse boundaries.

It needs to be noted that grassroots partnerships emerge between faculty members who typically (though not always) use Internet technologies to develop research and scholarly collaborations, to organize service learning and community-based projects as well as to bring students together for joint teaching and learning experiences (Boehm, Kurthen, & Aniola-Jedrezerek, 2010; Little, Titarenko, & Bergenson, 2005; Herrington & Tretyakov, 2005; Patterson, Carrillo, & Salinas, 2012; Starke-Meyerring, 2008). These collaborations reflect not only the disciplinary areas of the partnered faculty and their pedagogical approaches, but also each faculty partner's experiences of and access to technology.

Information technologies have great potential for institutional shift toward peer production and Internet-facilitated collaboration, shared knowledge making, and joint action across traditional boundaries (Benkler, 2006; Lessig, 2006). The increased participation and interaction across traditional national, political, institutional boundaries involves a shift toward what Benker (2006) identifies as "multilingualism, divergence, and enduringly deep diversity" (p. 209). This enriched diversity dynamic calls educators to revisit the ways in which we develop our practices and engage with the educational community.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, much research has focused on the use of information technology to facilitate collaboration and social interaction. This has been fueled by advances in digital technology and the subsequent increase in global social networking as seen by the growth of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The development of collaborative tools such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, social networking sites, and open-source learning platforms facilitated the development of Global Network Learning Environments (GNLEs), Shared Online Learning Environments (SOLE) and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) (Duffy & Bruns, 2006; Selwyn, 2009). Today, information technology allows educators and students to form and sustain collaborative environments for work, research, and learning in ways unimaginable just a decade ago. Never before have people experienced a technology that has evolved so rapidly, eliminating the constraints of space and time, and reshaping the way we communicate, collaborate, think, and learn.

The world of formal education is a liminal space, a space on the cusp of the old, and the new. A space where the old may no longer apply, or may no longer work, and where the new is still unknown, to some degree. In the same way 'collaboration' may also be seen as a liminal space. The current emphasis on technology and innovation continually forces and shifts the boundaries of what is 'normal' in terms of both education and collaboration, however, regardless of what technologies may be used to facilitate

collaboration, at its heart collaboration is rooted in relationships. Indeed this paper itself is the result of relationships that were initiated and maintained via technology over the better part of seven years without the collaborators ever having met in person.

Concluding Thoughts

Most researchers agree that collaborative endeavours could be incredibly important in its ability to transform knowledge *as well as* addressing the complexity of the real world. That is, collaborations could possibly have it all—theory and practice, a type of symbiotic collaboration in which each part of the research supports the other, generating a truly meaningful *and* transformative field of knowledge. Ultimately, when participating in collaborative ventures, participants must feel that the benefits—the potential for impact, positive experiences—outweigh the negatives, whether those negatives involve the blurring of professional boundaries, scheduling difficulties, or the sense that nothing is happening (Freeth, 2001, p. 44). When in its most ideal form, collaboration can break down power barriers and ossified modes of thinking, but participants must see progress being made. It is not enough, the research would suggest, to feel that something is happening. When progress happens, collaborative partnerships in higher education can break down barriers between epistemologies and fields of study, generating new and transformative ways of seeing the world. Collaboration can offer something few other strategies can: a means to see the world through multiple lens and in a truly different and transformative way.

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In Cahoots with the Library: Working Together to Help Students Become Better Researchers

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Abstract

This article presents five things that the university instructor can do to help students improve their research abilities. These include (1) talking to students about what research means and about what their expectations are for them, (2) giving students opportunities to develop research skills, (3) explaining why students need to use the library and not just Google, (4) encouraging students to ask for help, and (5) inviting a librarian to class. Some of these things take very little time and effort, but can make a big difference for students.

Keywords: library; research; information literacy; librarian

Introduction

Students need to know how to conduct research and how to think critically in order to do well at university and to be successful in many other areas of life. Unfortunately, many students enter university without these vital skills and many also struggle to learn them while they are here. There is a lot that instructors can do to help students become better researchers. Some take more time and effort than others, but even some of the things that take very little time and effort can make a big difference.

This article presents five things that you, the university instructor, can do to help students improve their research abilities. The ideas and suggestions in this article are based on my experiences and observations as a librarian at UNB Saint John, where I have worked since 2007.

1. Talk to your students about what research means

I highly recommend that you take some time in your courses to ask your students what research means to them. I suspect you will find that their idea of research differs in some important ways from yours. For many students, research has never meant anything more than using Google. A conversation about what research really means, and about what you expect of them, could make a big difference.

A great way to teach students about research is to tell them about your own research experiences: about how you learned to do research, about mistakes you made along the way, about the standards that you follow now, about insights you have gained from your own research, and about how your research connects with that of others and contributes to a greater understanding of your subject. Students need to know that academic research is a complex process and that research abilities must be

developed over time. Talking to them about this will help them understand and appreciate not only the processes and standards of academic research but also the purposes and value of it.

2. Get your students to engage in research

Students are more likely to improve their research abilities if they are required to conduct research. Some courses provide more opportunities than others, but most courses provide opportunities for students to do at least a little bit of research. For example, if there is an article you want your students to read you could show them how to find it for themselves on the library's website rather than giving them the article directly. Every little bit of instruction and practice helps.

If you are able to assign a project/paper that requires students to engage in significant research, here are a few points to consider:

- (i.) Assignments should not be overwhelming, but they should be challenging enough that students need to learn one or two new research abilities to complete them. Ideally, students should always be building a little on what they know. I have had very bright, fourth-year students tell me that until they started their honours theses they had never felt a need to use the library before, and that now they feel embarrassed at not knowing what to do and stressed about having to learn a lot in a short period of time. This should not happen. Their previous assignments should have prepared them better. As you design assignments, think about how they can help students gradually improve their research abilities.
- (ii.) Instructors sometimes put strict limits on what types of sources students can use in their research—for example, that they can only use peer-reviewed articles, or only sources published in the past three years. I understand why they do this, but there are many sources that are not traditional scholarly works that are reliable and highly relevant to certain subjects, and students should feel free to use any source that helps them achieve their purpose. The important thing, of course, is for students to evaluate sources critically before deciding to use them. If they learn to do this then they will be more successful and more likely to keep consulting good sources after their courses are finished.
- (iii.) You may want to talk to a librarian about the assignments you plan to give so that she or he can check that there are enough reliable resources available. The librarian may also be able to create a specialized library guide for your course, or recommend new resources that you may not be aware of. Librarians can also be better prepared to help students with assignments when they know about the assignments ahead of time. It only takes a minute to send a copy of your assignment to a liaison/subject librarian with a note that says "FYI" or "feedback welcome," and librarians appreciate this. In some cases, it could also be beneficial to invite a librarian to assist in the design of a research assignment. Not only are librarians aware of what resources are available, they can also offer insights into the information behaviours and abilities of the typical student.

3. Tell students to use the library

Several years ago, some other librarians and I conducted focus group sessions in which we asked students to tell us at what point in their research they turn to the library's resources. I remember very well one student's response. He said: "I go to the library when my professor tells me I have to." A number of other students said essentially the same thing.

A lot of students will avoid using the library because it is not as easy to use as resources like Google. What they may or may not realize, though, is that the library provides access to a lot of high-quality scholarly resources that they cannot get outside the library's physical and online collections. I overheard a graduate student once incorrectly tell his peers that they did not have to use the library because Google Scholar "contains everything the library has." The truth is that although technological advances have made research easier in some ways, they have made it harder in other ways, and libraries are just as important now as they have ever been. It is important to tell your students that they need to use the library and that they should be prepared to work hard to find the information they need.

Students expect librarians to tell them to use the library, so when we do it does not mean as much to them as it does when you tell them. Plus, they know that you will be grading them and that they need to listen to you if they want a good grade.

4. Encourage students to ask librarians for help

A lot of students do not know that they can ask librarians for help. Libraries are trying to get the word out, but we could really use your help. Please tell your students that librarians are happy to help them find information and to teach them how to develop better research strategies and abilities.

Libraries provide face-to-face research help without the need to make an appointment. Most also offer help by phone, email, and instant message during certain hours. It is also common for academic libraries to have liaison/subject librarians that students can make appointments with.

I know several instructors that include the name and contact information of an appropriate liaison/subject librarian in their course syllabuses and assignment instructions, along with a brief note encouraging students to see the librarian for help. It takes very little time or effort to do this. Likewise, when individual students ask you how they can do better on future assignments you can encourage them, among other things, to see a librarian for research help.

One professor that I enjoy working with offers his students a bonus point if they visit me for help. I see a lot of his students, and he has noted that the quality of the assignments he receives has improved as a result. In another course, students are required to see me for help with a specific assignment. If you want to do something like this, I suggest you speak with the librarian first to make sure this will work: the size of the class, the nature of the assignment, and the librarian's schedule will have to be considered, and the librarian will need to know to tell you who comes for help. In an ideal world, students would not have to be bribed or required to see someone who will help them, but this has proven to be an effective way of introducing them to the library, and many of the students have returned for help with other assignments that did not offer bonus points.

5. Invite a librarian to class

If you can invite a librarian to speak to your class about research and the library, please consider doing so. This can go a long way towards helping students learn about research, and to helping them feel more comfortable with the librarian and more likely to ask for help later.

Speaking from experience, students pay far more attention to me when my class presentations are based on the assignments they have to do. General overviews of "using the library" are good too, but they are not nearly as effective. If you invite a librarian to your class, I recommend asking him or her to focus on teaching students how to do research for the course assignments. I also highly recommend

that, before the visit, you tell your students that the librarian will be providing important information about the assignment and that you expect them to attend.

Students will notice whether you attend the librarian's presentation or not, and will take cues from you on how closely they should pay attention. The best experiences for me are the ones where professors not only attend the presentations but also participate by asking questions and by sharing their own research tips and experiences. This does a lot to help students see that research is important, that there is always more to learn, and that they can learn from both professors and librarians.

Most of the presentations I give last about 45-minutes, but I am very flexible about how much time to take. Your librarian should be flexible too and respect that your class time is limited and that you are the best judge of how to use that time. In some cases, I have made multiple visits to a class throughout the term. In other cases, I have given very targeted 10-minute presentations to classes. It depends on the needs of the course and the wishes of the professor. I think that even having a librarian drop into class for a minute to say hi and to tell students that they want to help is better than no visit. I also think the best time for a visit is a week or two before an assignment is due.

Some academic departments have worked out plans for which of their courses should include library instruction. This is a great way to help ensure that most, if not all, students in a particular program get the same amount of library instruction, and that they learn appropriate skills at the most appropriate times.

Conclusion

There are a lot of different ways that professors and librarians can work together to help students improve their research abilities. Hopefully, this article has helped you identify some things to try. I encourage you to speak with the librarians at your institution to see what ideas they have and to discuss how you would like to work together.

Students will eventually forget a lot of the specific course content they learn at university, but if they learn how to conduct research and how to think critically there is a good chance these abilities will stay with them and benefit them throughout their lives. We can make a big difference by helping them learn and improve these abilities.

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Building Relationship across Culture and Distance in a Hybrid Course

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Abstract

Hybrid courses that integrate distance education and face-to-face experiences are becoming increasingly common. Navigating these contexts while developing community brings challenges. A one-week intensive followed by a semester online has become a familiar teaching pattern as I recently returned from the opening of my fifteenth such course with teachers in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). This paper focuses attention on what has been learned in terms of building relationship.

Cross-cultural intricacies and collaborations with Trinidadian partners require openness to shifting expectations, local nuances and day-to-day realities on the ground. I have developed a rich rapport over thirteen years while continuing to learn through ongoing efforts to better understand the cultural context. The opportunity to share a variety of ways of being in cahoots is welcomed. Critical elements include situating any challenges within a broader framework encompassing culture, communication, personal histories, and the present. An emphasis on the importance of the time physically together within the entire course design is especially significant to the development of relationship. Commitment to learning and communications throughout the year has been central to the development of my rapport with partners, former students, mentors and colleagues in T&T.

Complexity must be acknowledged. For instance, “Who is the international student?” According to UNB, it is the Trinibagonians; meanwhile, the course opens in Trinidad and continues in D2L, neither a home to me. Please join us and participate in discussion of the juxtaposition of culture, context, and teaching models as we grapple with implications for developing healthy learning communities.

Keywords: community; cross-cultural; hybrid course; mathematics education

Personal Retrospective

August 2003—My initial journey to Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). Egrets along airport runways make for a lasting first impression on a Saturday afternoon. Then the heat and humidity follow upon exiting the plane. The subsequent day there would be relaxed. It was only after classes began on Monday that I realized the extent of my foolishness upon learning that my walk had taken me into one of the least safe areas of the capital. This moment foreshadowed critical aspects of personal experiences in Trinidad and Tobago as extending the boundaries beyond the confines of the classroom became critical to my times there. My inclination is not to simply return to the hotel but rather to be present in the place whether that is the core of the capital city a short walk from where we teach when in Port of Spain, or an outing

with locals (known as Trininis) to take in food or natural surroundings. Stories abound through accidental encounters with people, bird watching, and engagement with local stories.

Two weeks in July 2016 marked my fourteenth visit with the commencement of both my fourteenth and fifteenth cohorts in respective weeks at northern (Port of Spain) and southern (San Fernando) locations. The respective cohorts have characteristics extending beyond uniqueness to capture the sense of place with different identities that affect the way the course unfolds. In fact, the course is seen differently as the site of the course and the cultural lenses for viewing the experiences are different. (Those interested in teacher education and/or mathematics may wish to see Grant McLoughlin, 2010 for more discussion on the course.)

Prior experiences have included a single occasion with a Tobago cohort and several with central cohorts. The Tobago cohort has a different character on a much less populated island with beaches and tourism omnipresent. Cultural backgrounds including the distribution of different religious denominations are also noticeably distinct in Tobago. In fact, each cohort depicts trends reflecting local characteristics. I have also taught several central cohorts in a relatively laid back environment compared to the urban northern and southern sites (on the island of Trinidad). The geographically central location of Couva is more serene and comes with its own story. This town was in close proximity of the expansive sugar estates which once existed—an important element of national cultural, labour, and political history. The contrast in settings is perhaps best illustrated by the frequency with which people from past courses dropped into the Couva site. One vivid memory is the week when some past students (graduates) appeared on different days to surprise me with homemade lunches. The caring and generous nature of the people has been constant from the beginning of my T&T experiences in 2003, a time when students were not in cohorts but rather all found their way to the capital for the face-to-face components. The program operated on a continuous intake model then with students being in anything from their first to final course when meeting them in class. The cohort model commenced when the Government of Trinidad and Tobago first announced it would pay the tuition for teachers to enable them to pursue degrees. The fact that UNB was already engaged on the ground with local partners resulted in almost instantaneous growth in demand with one development being the establishment of regional cohorts.

Undoubtedly I know much more of this country now, but perhaps the most striking lesson has been the awareness of how small that knowledge is compared to how much has been learned of the complexity of place, culture, and education. That is, in a peculiar way the reality is that I am acutely aware my efforts to become more acquainted with the place have been overshadowed by the many things not to be understood by me. You will notice that the word “I” is being used as it is my perceptions that are being shared here. The acknowledgment of personal stories is central to understanding the teaching approach and my philosophy in general, as ultimately each one of us is a moving story. Many of the 700 or so teachers who have been in my classes there have made cameos in my life story, and likewise in return I suspect. Yet there are many—likely one hundred or so—who have affected me on some deeper level whether through moving stories, perspectives, or in some cases friendship that has grown over the years. That gets me to the *Cahoots* theme.

My teaching there is not a solitary activity in any way. Rather others have played critical roles in the picture. Relationships have evolved whether with Floyd the driver, or the administrative people with whom we have worked over the years including Earl, Genevieve, Kendrick, Natasha, and others. Mentors are assigned to our courses to assist on site and subsequently facilitate local participation/meetings in the remaining months of the course. Some of these people have worked with me over many years while extending themselves to bring me around to parts of the country ranging from landmarks to beaches to bird sanctuaries to special food locations. While this may read like a personal reflection of

sorts, it is paramount to the formation of community from my perspective. The students (teachers) are intrigued to learn of the travels, perceptions, and observations of someone from Canada who has visited schools, appreciated scarlet ibises, made excursions to relatively isolated places, and generally made an effort to learn about the nation. Likewise I am fascinated to meet people from these communities with diverse experiences of place and context.

An ability to draw upon such personal experiences for relevant mathematical examples enriches the course along with credibility in terms of connection. Two course assignments build on the local theme. An ethnomathematical assignment requires students to interview and/or observe someone in their respective community from a mathematical perspective. People gain appreciation for mathematics and the people using the math as seamstresses, market vendors, farmers, tile layers, or workers in other fields. A subsequent assignment incorporates a mathematical walk. The idea of bringing mathematical attention to a familiar roadway or grove of trees or schoolyard awakens a consciousness.

Course Context

Context is critical to framing the picture. Basically the course consists of an opening face-to-face experience of five days followed by an online experience mediated through D2L (or Blackboard or WebCT in earlier days). Each course begins in a classroom setting during a pause in school associated with December, the Easter period, or summer. Class sizes are usually 35 to 50 students, though the initial southern cohort had 82 students. The online portion of the course typically lasts three to four months, though longer on occasion. Historically the students have been in-service teachers with many years of experience including Teacher's College (without a degree). Recently there has been a shift with the majority of students having little formal education around teaching, though a variety of experiences including many in early childhood education settings or independent schools. Since the shift to mainly a pre-service degree offering, the student pool has included taxi drivers, police officers, business people, office clerks and fulltime students among the mix.

The mathematics methods course (ED 5940) is part of a UNB degree. Hence, the authority is clearly in the hands of the professor, or lecturer or tutor as they may say. Meanwhile the site is in another country, namely, Trinidad and Tobago. It raises questions as to which person is the outsider in the room, and perhaps even who is the international student. It could be argued that I am, though officially it is to be me in charge. This is just one of the many conundrums that arise as the juxtaposition of familiarity and unfamiliarity continue shifting back and forth depending upon the focus – from course material to cultural expectations including language. The language remains English, though the accents and dialects have introduced me to many expressions. Meanwhile my accent and vocabulary differ from their expectations, thus, making pace and speech examples of things to navigate collectively.

*Meeting before meeting
Learning from the past
Checking in on the future
Being awake to the present*

These four guiding principles will be outlined here with respect to how they figure into the development of community and the building of relationship.

Meeting Before Meeting

A welcome note is sent out to prospective students about four to six weeks prior to the start of our course. The note is also a call to people to bring along any math manipulatives they can provide for our

face-to-face session, thus, reducing the need to ship materials. An excerpt from a recent note is shared here:

Welcome to ED 5940.

I look forward to working with you in the upcoming math block starting in July. In an effort to make this work best for all involved, I am putting out a request here for "math manipulatives", as outlined below. If some of these names are unfamiliar to you, do not worry. We will work with them and you will get a grasp of them. Any people who are able to bring some of the materials are encouraged to do so. (I understand that most of you will not have any of these materials. That is fine.) Again, I extend a hearty welcome to all of you. My name is John McLoughlin and you can call me John. The D2L course site will open late in June. Please stay tuned for an announcement of that, and do make an effort to check regularly for communications there in advance of the course opening. See you in July.

The D2L site opens a few weeks before we physically meet. Two things are set up to facilitate the growth of community. First, there is a *trial run* assignment. Students are asked to provide some written text and/or images concerning any aspect of Trinidad and Tobago that they would like to share. Suggestions include special places, fauna, natural sites, food, cultural festivals or traditions. The submission of this ungraded assignment makes people feel a little more comfortable with using D2L while offering me some insight into the class. My responses initiate communication at an individual level, and the learning has been rich. Secondly, a discussion is opened on *Interesting Numbers*, thus, enabling people to try out that feature and learn a little about numbers at the same time. Such opportunities are particularly valuable for those new to using these systems.

Learning from the Past

Ultimately this lesson runs throughout the entire planning and teaching process. Among the practical implications is the end of firm due dates for assignments. Rather than firm due dates, there are due dates with one week grace periods (no penalties) that have firm finishes as denoted by a shut dropbox. The need for this change has been lessened with more reliable internet in place—a sharp contrast to the dialup required by almost all students in earlier years. The stress reduction and the reduced need of special considerations have been mutually beneficial. Related to planning are the dates themselves, as an effort is made to avoid any national or religious holidays. Further the discussion groups are set up to begin on Friday, Saturday and Sunday with students choosing each week which suits their personal schedule that week. The groups are therefore not rigidly defined.

Cultural perspectives on matters of confidentiality, the significance of hierarchical structures, and the importance of grades figure into the course design. For instance, the mentors are placed in my course as auditors rather than as teaching assistants. This means that they see what students see and nothing more. The importance of such a practice is better understood when one realizes that the mentors are often colleagues or principals within the schools that others work without mentioning the networks of acquaintances from past staffing associations, years in college, or even relatives. Overt mention of the policy makes people more comfortable that they will be the ones who see grades and personal comments. (Pressures and expectations for the mentors are also lessened.) Much is made of the importance of trust and respect as essential features that enable rich discussion online as well as taking risks in problem solving situations. The focus on grades became clearer to me as I learned more about a

system that has a national exam at Grade 6 level (Standard 5) to determine the schools in which these students will continue studies.

Checking In on the Future

The future refers here primarily to the immediate future timeframe within which the course is situated. Previously the idea of incorporating biography has been discussed at an AAU Teaching Showcase (see Grant McLoughlin, 2009). Mathematical biographies are handed in the second and third days together so as to facilitate returning them along with necessary conversations while present on site. One aspect of the biography is an invitation to mention any matters that are likely to intervene during the course time that may affect the student. Such issues as surgery, health of a family member, or other circumstances may be noted. This is part of checking in on the future. The personal element extends to me in terms of informing students of times at which it will be difficult to reach me, or possibly circumstances such as matters of parental health that were likely to interrupt my attention in the recent fall semester.

A buddy system is employed with each student submitting the name of another student who gives permission for his/her name to be used as a contact person. For example, suppose that Sarah has a health matter of concern or a technological issue, it will be known in advance that Vishnu will be letting me know (as Sarah has already given her consent). Likewise if for some reason it has become difficult for me to get a reply from Sarah as she has not been online much, I can take the step of contacting Vishnu with the concern. The system is most valuable when there are ongoing issues that no longer require an individual to get online simply to send me a message when much more important issues are in play.

The course outline is discussed with elaboration of details on the nature of assignments and expectations prior to any posting of the outline. This allows for clarification on two key points that are unknown in advance. First, there is confirmation that important course dates or deadlines do not conflict with significant dates. Second, any students who have concerns with the assignments can raise them in person. This latter point concerns someone who may not have ready access to a classroom to try out a teaching oriented assignment. Awareness of significant national pastimes, events, and festivals is helpful. The hosting of the World Cup of Cricket, a national election, and carnival are examples of events that have factored into past course experiences. A myriad of cultural events form the T&T landscape. These have emerged from the cosmopolitan nation where people of different, creed and race come together to celebrate. Of course, many of the participating teachers over the years have enlightened me with respect to both the events and personal experiences related to them.

Being Awake to the Present

The present refers to the time and place in which we find ourselves daily throughout a course. The importance of the five days together must not be under-estimated as there is a special opportunity to build relationship. Whether it be the one-to-one conversations, sharing meals, exchanging stories, using concrete materials, or engaging in mathematics and movement, the fact is that there are many aspects of the course that need to be carried out while physically together including discussions about math anxiety. The face-to-face component is the common experience upon which we build the course.

The present also extends to the day-to-day lives of students and myself. An effort is made to follow the news in Trinidad and Tobago so as to demonstrate a spirit of concern while enabling communications about important matters. A related effort is made to apprise students of Canadian events also, including weather and seasonal photos.

Flooding, water shortages, crime, school closures, and many other things affect students in the course. I return to the idea of us all representing moving stories. It is this awareness that remains central to the teaching of the course. The reality is that some people will have experiences that diminish the significance of the course a great deal, and as a teacher I do my best to be supportive. Recently the understanding was reciprocated in many ways as numerous students extended support for the challenges throughout the course in terms of my focus. Tuning into the present goes a long way to fostering respect and developing community.

Closing Remarks

I am always learning and the writing here is an effort to impose some structure on where that process is now. The explicit discussion and reflection pushes me to contribute to a broader discussion. My perception is that many teachers have stories worth sharing with a wider audience. This is but one teacher's sharing of a piece of his big picture. The ideas intersect with areas such as cross-cultural teaching and related implications for the increased internationalization and diversity in our own campuses, including my own teaching. The work of people, including colleagues such as Lyle Hamm and Alan Sears, offer considerable insight into such topics at local levels (cf. Hamm, Peck, & Sears, 2017). Our classrooms are changing and the experiences in Trinidad and Tobago have sensitized me to some significant points in my own teaching. For instance, an effort is made to avoid conflicts with any cultural celebrations or dates when the course outline is established.

Weimer (2011) highlights the work of Carolin Kreber concerning elements of becoming an authentic teacher. Whether referring to being true to one self or caring about the subject or being interested in the learners, my self-assessment would suggest that these components are all central to the experiences shared in this paper. The idea of looking through the lens of authentic teaching offers another way of viewing the experience. Personally it challenges me to extend this to the student perspective both in terms of how they see authenticity in teaching, along with potentially identifying examples of authenticity as learners.

Prior to the publication of these proceedings I will be teaching in Trinidad again for a sixteenth time. The course will be offered to a northern cohort in Port of Spain in April. The messages in that short sentence are many. I can imagine the classroom setting and get a sense of the cultural diversity while acknowledging the course coincides with late stages of a school year. So the Standard Five teachers will be under tremendous pressure as the students in their classes write that critical national assessment exam in May. Meanwhile these same teachers will be more apt to try out ideas in the course in June when the pressure has gone. The context of time, space, and circumstances begin to unfold with an awareness that new stories, unexpected elements, and surprises will continue to enrich the teaching and learning experiences.

Writing poetry or playful prose has figured prominently into my Trinidadian experiences. Sharing some writing or perhaps preparing a collection of haiku as a reflection at the end of a week has become another way of connecting with the students. One Sunday afternoon I walked to Independence Square in the capital city with an intention of finding a seat and noting observations through verse. The result was about six pages in length. The entire effort is usually shared in class. It appears such a perspective on a familiar place by someone from away (me) is welcomed. It marks another way of connecting stories. An excerpt is shared here as a means of closing with another important lesson.

*Looking up:
 all shades of people
 as many colours of clothes
 flags waving
 music playing
 vendors selling
 two people sleeping
 on a sidewalk
 many more simply liming
 content to talk
 a Trini pastime mixing well
 with a walk –
 something I must do soon
 for one thing I've learned
 is don't overstay your welcome
 one might get burned
 by the darkness of night
 that encloses so soon
 like clockwork each day
 six hours past noon.*

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In Cahoots in the Lab and Field: Faculty Experiences with Undergraduate Student Involvement in Research

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Abstract

There is increasing interest in involving undergraduate students in research. This involvement is in keeping with the spirit of Bloom's taxonomy of educational goals. As three recent AAU award winners (2016), we found that one cornerstone to our teaching philosophy approaches is to involve undergraduate students in research early in their careers. Here we discuss three aspects related to involving undergraduate students in research. We begin by reviewing the literature that shows the benefits of involvement in research. Second, we review how students are typically involved in research groups to achieve these goals. Third, we present some of the obstacles that we have faced in doing so, along with potential solutions. This experiential report is intended to provide insight into the process of involving undergraduate students in research, and potentially help faculty incorporate students into their research plans more readily.

Keywords: undergraduate teaching; research; Bloom's taxonomy

The Push to Involve Undergraduate Students in Research

Many universities encourage, or even require, undergraduate students to engage in research with the expectation that it will provide them with a meaningful and authentic learning experience. Forming student-faculty research partnerships has been shown to positively impact retention of those facing a higher risk of attrition, such as African American students or students with low GPAs (Gregerman et al., 1998). In a survey-based study of those who participated in a funded position with a substantial research component, Russell et al. (2007) found that research opportunities increased undergraduates' feelings of confidence in their research skills, awareness of what graduate school entails, anticipation of pursuing a PhD, and understanding of how to perform research. Russell and colleagues also documented that the length of the research experience matters; those who had one to three months of experience were less likely to expect to continue progressing towards a PhD, as compared to those with more than 12 months of experience. Based on their survey data, they conclude "Respondent comments... suggest that mentors who are able to combine enthusiasm with interpersonal, organizational, and research skills play a large role in facilitating positive outcomes" (p. 549).

Evidence supporting the benefits of undergraduate research experience is actually rather scarce. Linn et al. (2015) review 60 empirical studies of undergraduate research experiences and categorise the

rewards under five themes: mentorship, promotion of persistence and identity, communication of the nature of science, improvement in research practices and expansion of conceptual understanding. More than half of the studies depend upon self-reporting surveys or interviews. While there have been “60 empirical studies published in the last 5 years, only 4 directly measured gains in research capabilities or conceptual understanding.” In this limited context, though, undergraduates express increased enthusiasm for research, once they have some experience with it, and persistence in research is increased. Even when students do not continue in research, their experience gives them a better appreciation for the process and leaves them in a better position to understand and judge the output of research. Furthermore, some research expertise is developed and new concepts may be encountered (albeit in a fragmentary way in research experiences of short duration). Although we do not have a clear understanding of how much an individual gains from her or his experience, or even *why* they benefit, with suitable research planning and support, the costs to faculty are minimal relative to the potential rewards for undergraduate researchers. Mentoring undergraduate student research takes time, energy, and consumes limited resources (e.g., grant funding), but the potential for student growth, in our opinion, offsets these costs.

There remain a multitude of issues that plague research into this area. For example, how does one compare the various learning outcomes, such as the benefits directly yielded by individual partnerships with a particular faculty member versus those accrued through involvement in research conducted within a classroom? This is complicated by the existing divide between qualitative and quantitative scholarship of teaching and learning research, driven by the need for large sample sizes for relevant empirical data. We leave it to future researchers to isolate the relevant factors that are needed to address such difficulties. Herein, instead, we use our individual, discipline-specific experiences to argue in favour of involving undergraduate students in research, whether - in a classroom setting or one-on-one in a laboratory. In order to situate our experiences somewhat, we briefly review Bloom’s taxonomy, which clearly proposes the worth of undergraduate involvement in research in allowing them to move beyond the first levels of the hierarchy, towards a stage where they may integrate their knowledge and experiences.

Brief Review of Bloom’s Taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom developed a taxonomy of the cognitive domain, used to classify educational goals for evaluation of student performance (Bloom, 1956). Bloom’s taxonomy, as it came to be known, provides a well-accepted framework for organizing educational objectives into a useful, applicable hierarchy, composed of the stages of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The objectives in the higher classes build upon those that are lower. One guiding principle of Bloom’s taxonomy is that while educators presumably consider the retention of knowledge to be important, few would consider it as the only goal of education. “Although information or knowledge is recognized as an important outcome of education, very few teachers would be satisfied to regard this as the primary or the sole outcome of instruction. What is needed is some evidence that the students can do something with their knowledge, that is, that they can apply the information to new situations and problems.” (p. 38).

The enduring nature of Bloom’s taxonomy is impressive; a review of the recent literature shows that it remains in contemporary use as a guide for shaping current educational programs. For example, Kidwell et al. (2013) discuss the application of the taxonomy to accounting ethics education, while Pappas and colleagues (2013) present its applicability for teaching engineering design for sustainability.

While examples such as these demonstrate Bloom's taxonomy is used, there has been some criticism of incorrect use. For example, Booker (2007) posits that Bloom's taxonomy has been inappropriately applied to students in the K-12 education system, but was intended to address higher education. Others have re-interpreted or re-conceptualized Bloom's original framework. For example, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) expanded Bloom's proposed single dimension of the original taxonomy into a revised two-dimensional framework that disentangles factual or conceptual knowledge and the related cognitive processes. Likewise, Apple and Krumsieg (2001) consider the six levels with respect to transferable knowledge that progress in complexity. None of these criticisms impacts the relevance of Bloom's taxonomy in the current context.

Research as Learning: Why It Is Necessary

Research provides the environment for students to develop many transferrable skills, such as planning, time-management, judgment, oral and written communication, leadership and team-work, and responsibility. Indeed, these skills are often missing from routine undergraduate courses and yet are in-demand in the workforce, according to the National Research Council of the National Academies (Pellegrino and Hilton, 2012). Research also promotes the building of conceptual connections and stops compartmentalization of subject area and methodology. We and others (e.g. Gates et al. 1998) suppose that research encourages students to think more broadly, solve problems, and arrive at solutions using principles that they may have acquired in other situations. Students also learn how to plan and react to unexpected, time-delaying, and often negative experimental results or hiccups in process, such as ordering of supplies or approval through internal review boards. In comparison to course work, as a generalization, text book questions have associated answer keys while research questions do not necessarily provide directions on how to find answers, or certainty that there even *are* answers. Thus, research offers an authentic experience that reflects what academic life is, and allows students to engage in deep, engrossing, individual experiences that enable them to actively engage and satiate their curiosity. Last, incorporation of research into a program is often critical for accreditation.

How Students Are Involved in Research

There are many ways to incorporate research into the undergraduate programme (see Brew, 2013, for a review). Undergraduate research experiences are often offered as part of an honours program, as capstone courses, where they may appear as a project course and may be accompanied by research methods or independent study pre-requisites. There is considerable variation on the duration and expectations of the research project course, from single-term short-report courses to multi-year thesis-and-defense models, but they are typically offered with one-on-one faculty supervision, making these authentic research experiences (graduate studies in miniature) with tremendous opportunities for undergraduates to develop an integrated understanding of both the subject of their investigation and the process of undertaking research.

A glimpse of the research process may also be offered through coursework. Many undergraduate programs include a research methods course, which can be experiential rather than expository. Such a course is the ideal venue in which to develop techniques for searching and critically reading journal articles, for collecting and analyzing data and for giving and receiving peer review. These are difficult and nuanced skills, which require explicit instruction and practice. Assignments in any course can, and should, be crafted to require research methodologies. Certain classroom delivery methods lend themselves to open-ended homework and projects (problem-based learning or inquiry learning, for example). Homework, even in large classes, can involve participation in actual citizen research, in which volunteers (our students) help to analyze big data in ongoing projects (e.g., www.zooniverse.org).

Research coursework can provide a safe, scaffolded context for undergraduates to come to grips with the open-endedness of research. Truly unconstrained research can be daunting to those who have primarily experience of right-or-wrong style assessment, but a research course can foster exploration within limited confines or with prescribed tools.

Other undergraduate research experiences can be engineered during the course of a regular term. Many institutions partially fund a work-study program (10 hours per week is typical) and it is possible to involve students in research in this way. At CBU, first year chemistry students volunteer for 2-3 hours per week in a 4-week rotation in active research programs as part of the Research Awareness in Chemistry Education (RACE) program.

Undergraduate researchers are also involved in summer research projects, both nationally organized (the NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Awards, for example) and locally initiated (e.g. UNB has a Summer Employment Program supported by the New Brunswick government). Summer projects can range up to 16 weeks and, as mentioned, the general rule is that longer research experiences are more effective at allowing students to develop a connected picture of their research project (Linn et al., 2015). Co-op placements can provide an opportunity for extended enculturation and it is increasingly simple to stay involved in a student's research experience during a co-op placement, even at a distance. Undergraduate students can be encouraged to return for second and subsequent summer projects. Whether these are in the same research project or not, the continued exposure to the demands of research work allows students to develop an understanding of how their field is being progressed.

Obstacles and Solutions

Class size (e.g., >100 students) is often cited to be a major obstacle to incorporating research into classes. However this can be overcome in various ways. It may be an institution, department or faculty choice to make research experiences available to a restricted number of students (e.g. upper-division or honours students only). However, there are more imaginative solutions. For example, it is our experience that substantial numbers of students (e.g., 40 honours students each year at Saint Mary's) *can* be involved in research by careful choice of projects that can be undertaken by groups. Group members can be made responsible for different facets of a larger investigation or can be each engaged in collecting some part of a substantial data set. In classes with 30-50 students, independent student research can be presented as a conference-style poster session, at which volunteer colleagues are audience/judges. The largest classes can benefit from exposure to current research, even if it is impractical for them all to be immediately involved. Guest speakers, for example, can explain how the principles covered during a particular course are applied or being extended in the field, which can be a powerful motivation for students attempting to find their way through a compulsory course (e.g., Kember et al., 2008). These guest lectures also provide an insight to students that research is always continuing and that people, mostly young people, are at the forefront.

Other obstacles are more challenging to resolve. For laboratory work, safety often imposes an upper limit on the number of undergraduates who can experience the research environment. The availability of laboratory materials or disrepair of equipment can also have a much greater impact on a limited undergraduate research project than they would on graduate research. A delay in research ethics board approval can be catastrophic. Despite their shorter duration, undergraduate projects can require as much or more advanced planning than their graduate counterparts.

Careful research planning is also absolutely necessary to make each undergraduate research experience authentic. The limited duration of an undergraduate research placement and the limited experience of

the undergraduate researcher can narrow the scope of a potential project. Sometimes, especially in the context of a course, the researched material will be new to the students, but not to the discipline. However, the research process and the dissemination of the results can give the students a genuine experience of experimental design, data analysis or peer review, for example. With an authentic research experience comes the authentic risk that the project might be unsuccessful, but it is our responsibility to share with our students the essential learning that real problems are unconstrained. In a safe environment we can help our students to learn from and to document failures so that they can be built upon.

Research funding is often an obstacle. With the Canadian tri-agency commitment to research training of undergraduates as highly qualified personnel, funds can be available to those applying to NSERC, SSHRC or CIHR. However, not everyone willing to supervise an undergraduate research experience has access to such funds. The availability of alternative funding varies from institution to institution, but undergraduate research can be substantially funded through work-study programs or partly funded from provincial or federal programs like Canada Summer Jobs. Discipline-based education research can sometimes be supported from local teaching and learning priority funds. Co-supervision can share the cost of an undergraduate research opportunity. Alternatively, it is possible to supervise volunteers in the lab or field for short periods during the term or longer periods during the summer. Some research can be through industrial collaboration which can be funded through provincial grants and the NRC; however, due to the nature of often confidential research, dissemination of a student project may be withheld or significantly time delayed.

A lack of institutional support can be a barrier to offering undergraduate research experiences. The commitment to supervise student research differs greatly in contact time and in nature from regular teaching duties. The drive for faculty involved in research is often the passion for one's discipline, but this can lead willing supervisors to overextend. It is the responsibility of the institutions, through policies including collective agreements, to recognize and properly balance the commitment to undergraduate research with other teaching and service duties.

Potential undergraduate researchers can, unfortunately, rule themselves out by being reluctant to come forward or simply being unaware of the opportunities. Advertising and information sessions are important and it can help for academic advisors or first-year instructors (with whom undergraduates might be comfortable) to offer their help in making contact with potential supervisors. Academic advisors can also share with their undergraduate charges the opportunities to experience research at *other* institutions. Summer internships are available across the country with application deadlines typically in January or February. Limited space at a home institution can be mitigated by finding research placements away from home and undergraduates can benefit from both the research experience and the chance to explore another environment.

Conclusion

In our opinion, the involvement of undergraduates in research activities is a tremendous learning opportunity, and literature supports a range of other benefits, including retention. The inclusion of our students in both research coursework and in ongoing research projects benefits the undergraduates and the research programs themselves. Although supervision of students engaged in research can seem time-intensive, there are signs that the investment is increasingly considered worthwhile. It is important for us to construct a scaffolded introduction to the open-endedness that is characteristic of real research and real problems. When we can provide our students with the opportunity to see how knowledge is advanced in the field they find exciting, we can feed their intrinsic curiosity. Research

experiences sometimes encourage our students to continue their involvement in propelling the discipline forwards and always leave them better able to understand and assess the output of academic research.

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Speed Bumps or Road Blocks? Students' Perceptions of Barriers to Learning and Developing Academic Resilience

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Abstract

While we start out in life intrinsically curious, at some point throughout our journey from childhood to adulthood this curiosity begins to disappear (Berger, 2014; Lang, 2012). This is largely the result of various barriers and challenges, which can inhibit our willingness to explore our world (e.g., Kashdan, 2009). While the existence of barriers to curiosity has been documented (e.g., academic pressures, fear of failure), we have little insight into the lived experience of students' struggling to learn more independently. We, therefore, interviewed a group of third and fourth year undergraduates who had completed two "Curiosity Projects", once in second year and once in third/fourth year. In each semester-long "Curiosity Project", students chose their own topic, wrote ten weekly learning logs, engaged in weekly small group discussions and online feedback, created a final "fair" project, and reflected on their learning experience. The students we interviewed had also served as small group and online learning facilitators for junior students in the project for at least one semester demonstrating that they were deeply committed to the goal of independent, curiosity-driven learning. Analysis of these interviews suggests that despite positive experiences in their first Curiosity Project, most of these highly motivated students experienced unexpected challenges with knowledge/skill transfer. They differed, however, in how they perceived these challenges, as speed bumps or roadblocks. The environmental, personal and social pressures that impacted these perceptions and the students' ability to overcome the challenges they faced are the focus of this presentation.

Keywords: curiosity; inquiry; project-based learning; transformation

Introduction

We enter this world as curious beings, constantly exploring the world around us (Slater, Morison, & Rose, 1982; Berger, 2014). As we grow and develop this same curiosity enables us to think critically and innovatively (Lang, 2012). In addition, it offers benefits in many different aspects of our lives, such as our physical and mental health and relationships (Kashdan, 2009). Despite the positive influence that curiosity-driven behaviours can have in our lives, studies have shown that for one reason or another curiosity often disappears as we age (Lang, 2012; Bronson & Merryman, 2010). Somewhere throughout our lives and academic journeys our interest fades and the number of questions we ask decreases (Lang, 2012). In fact, research has shown that there is a negative correlation between grade level and number of questions asked (Lang, 2012). This disheartening reality has led to multiple efforts to change the way learning happens within academia.

One attempt to transform students' learning experiences is the Curiosity Project, which was developed in an attempt to encourage student engagement and a sense of ownership over their learning (MacKinnon, 2016). Although historically MacKinnon's (2016) students were expressing enjoyment and experiencing success within her courses, she was concerned about more than just their grades on professor-driven tests and assignments. She wanted to give the students the opportunity to reignite their curiosity, to question, and to own their own learning. This desire led to the development of the Curiosity Project as a part of her second year Social Psychology course. The incorporation of this project appeared to be having initial success in transforming students' engagement and experience within the scope of the 200-level course. In fact, students were so enthusiastic about their curiosity projects and learning how to learn, that they requested similar opportunities. This led to the development of a 400-level seminar class surrounding the construct of curiosity, which included the opportunity to engage in a second Curiosity Project. This paper focuses on ways in which the two opportunities were experienced differently and discusses the importance of thinking of curiosity, an inquiry project, as a part of a larger curriculum and not simply a "one and done" experience.

The Curiosity Project in a Nutshell

The Curiosity Project allows each student to select any topic within the field of social psychology or question that may be informed by it and explore it in depth over the course of the semester (MacKinnon, 2016). The three main elements of the project include: *weekly learning logs*, *online and in person feedback*, and *a final project and reflection*. Students document their learning in the form of weekly, informal learning logs, using a freewriting (Li, 2007) or writing to learn (Fry & Villagomez, 2007) approach. Logs are discussed in small groups and posted online to allow students to get feedback on their projects from their peers and learning facilitators face-to-face in the moment and online after further consideration (MacKinnon, 2016). This feedback provides students with new questions, perspectives and ideas to explore and helps students think critically about their topics. Finally, the students conclude the semester with a project and reflection, which provide them with the opportunity to creatively share and reflect upon their learning with others.

Initial explorations of the impact of this project on students have demonstrated positive results. MacKinnon (2016) found that students who participated in the Curiosity Project became better able to 1) learn both deeply and more broadly about their topics, 2) focus on the journey of learning instead of regurgitating information presented by the professor, 3) discover and think critically about their personal assumptions, preconceptions and questions regarding their topic, and 4) experience an investment in their own learning as well as in helping others through offering feedback. While this project significantly added to students' typical workload outside the testable material for the course, students performed just as well in the course quizzes and tests as students who did not have the extra project requirements (MacKinnon, 2016). More importantly, this project was successful in its goals of increasing student engagement in their own learning and fostering critical thought, question development, and exploration skills.

For the majority of students this was the first time they experienced this type of curiosity-driven learning within their undergraduate degrees. Their positive experiences inspired many to return to the course as volunteer learning facilitators for incoming cohorts. Out of these students, a small group of third and fourth year students were given the opportunity to participate in a modified, 400-level curiosity project. One of the goals of this senior course was to determine whether the skills learned in the first project were transferable to this second project. In exploring the nature of their 400-level Curiosity Project experiences researchers were left with the following questions: 1) What barriers and challenges were present in the first project and how were they addressed? 2) What skills were learned

in this first project? 3) How did the second project differ from this first experience, specifically in terms of barriers and challenges experienced? 4) Were participants able to transfer the skills learned in the first project into their experience with their second project? and finally 5) To what extent are projects like this a one-time fix for engaging student curiosity?

Method

In order to explore whether or not students had a similar positive experience of the Curiosity Project the second time around, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a unique group of highly motivated and invested individuals, who were recruited from the course "PSYC 432 Curiosity: Theory and Practice" (Boyle, 2015). This 400-level seminar consisted primarily of students who had completed a Curiosity Project in the past and who had served as volunteer learning facilitators for at least one semester. The Curiosity Project component of the course occurred as it had the first time except there were no assigned learning facilitators; instead students were expected to actively give their peers feedback.

All eight students who volunteered were female and either in their third or fourth year of their undergraduate degrees (Boyle, 2015). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, with a focus on exploring the nature of participants' first and second experiences of the curiosity project, the presence of any difficulties in either project, and any evidence of personal growth. The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using a qualitative, phenomenological approach.

Findings and Discussion

We first confirmed that for these participants, their first project was an unqualified positive and successful experience (MacKinnon, 2016). Any barriers or challenges students faced were overcome without lasting negative impacts on their learning or projects (Boyle, 2015). We refer to this experience of barriers as *speed bumps*. On the other hand, within the second project there was much greater variation in terms of participants' experiences. While a few had an experience similar to their first, the majority of participants were overwhelmed by the presence of *roadblocks*. In contrast to speed bumps, roadblocks occurred when the students faced barriers and were not able to overcome them. Instead the challenges impeded and hindered their learning within the project.

The Curiosity Project: Round One

In the first Curiosity Project, participants either experienced the project barrier-free or they faced and overcame barriers without any significant impact on their learning (Boyle, 2015).

Students who did not experience any barriers or challenges to their learning attributed this absence of difficulties to an overarching ownership, confidence and passion for learning about their topics. They also maintained open and positive mindsets about the project itself.

...It's as if you need that kind of confidence in yourself, in your project, and just in the whole method...I'm...now in this movement of own your own learning! (Boyle, 2015, p. 41)

This self-awareness and confidence suggests that for some students the initial Curiosity Project experience was sufficient to reignite and maintain their curiosity and ownership of learning.

Students who did face difficulties in their first Curiosity Project experienced them as speed bumps, which they overcame without significant influence on their projects and learning. These included a

perceived lack of structure, anxiety stemming from a desire to complete the project the 'right' way, or the experience of phenomenon they referred to as 'hitting a metaphorical wall' (Boyle, 2015).

Many students struggled particularly with the openness and freedom of the project itself, which was interpreted by many as an absence of structure (Boyle, 2015). The informal, 'free writing' nature of the learning logs along with no word minimums or maximums (MacKinnon, 2016) contributed to students feeling overwhelmed by a lack of structure within the project (Boyle, 2015). The surrounding and prevailing academic environment that rarely allows space for this kind of thought and learning contributed to students perceiving the project this way. In reality, the project had a very specific structure, consisting of weekly learning logs, feedback, and a final reflection (MacKinnon, 2016). However, the nature of this project differed from what students were accustomed to. In addition, students were given the freedom to choose their own topics instead of being assigned one, which could have contributed to this perception.

...you're not used to how...loose it can be...I was always trying to make it a research paper because my background is more science... (Boyle, 2015, p. 39).

Students who felt themselves influenced by a lack of structure, regardless of the source, were able to overcome this difficulty easily through a period of adjustment (Boyle, 2015). By giving themselves time to settle into the project, they adjusted to its open nature and were able to continue to learn within the scope of their project. Mindy expressed the importance of this period of adjustment:

...it's kind of like when a baby foal gets up and they are wobbling for the first little bit...And they get their footing. I think that's...what I was like the first few weeks—wobbling. But within a few weeks I just ran with it (Boyle, 2015, p. 39).

Feedback and support within the Curiosity Project were also important factors in helping students overcome these barriers (Boyle, 2015). This is increasingly evident as we consider the following two barriers that participants faced and how feedback from others enabled them to overcome these difficulties.

Within the first project, students were concerned with completing the project the 'right' way (Boyle, 2015). While the project structure naturally led to endless possibilities in terms of how to complete the project, students experienced an internal pressure to do it 'right.' Many felt that they should be completing the project in a similar fashion to a standard research paper, which limited their exploration of their topic. For example, they felt that they needed to explore primarily academic sources and write their learning logs in a formal manner pursuing support for an a priori thesis statement. In fact, the Curiosity Project is meant to encourage students to seek a wide range of types of sources, varying from speaking to others, consulting blogs, academic papers, or simply reflecting on their personal thoughts or preconceptions (MacKinnon, 2016). Students were able to overcome this pressure through the support and feedback of the professor. Laura indicated:

...as I started to get more feedback...I started to branch out a little bit more...I sort of let that anxiety go a bit [and] I was able to really open my perspective (Boyle, 2015, p. 40).

Formative feedback allowed her to let go of her anxiety and desire to be 'right' and instead follow the winding road of discovery that the Curiosity Project encourages. In this way, the desire to be 'right' acted as a speed bump for Laura, as it did not have a lasting impact on her learning.

The support and feedback from others was also an important factor in overcoming additional barriers, such as 'hitting a metaphorical wall' (Boyle, 2015). This idea of hitting a wall was described by one participant as a point in her learning where she had "exhausted a lot of [her] topic" (Boyle, 2015, p. 41). When students felt themselves run out of novel perspectives and subtopics they were able to overcome this difficulty by getting a fresh outlook from others' feedback. Through the support and feedback of others, students were able to move past this difficulty and continue within their curiosity projects.

The first project was considered a successful experience for all eight participants (Boyle, 2015). Any difficulties faced took on the form of speed bumps and participants were able to learn and employ various strategies in order to overcome them, such as allowing themselves the space to adjust to the project and relying on the support of others. For some, however, their second experience differed significantly from their first.

The Curiosity Project: Round Two

After the positive and successful experiences that participants had within their first Curiosity Projects, they enthusiastically began their second projects in the 400-level course (Boyle, 2015). Ultimately, participants within the second project fell into three broad categories: 1) one student who did not experience barriers and challenges, 2) two students who experienced barriers and challenges as speed bumps and continued to have successful projects and 3) five students who experienced barriers and challenges as roadblocks and were unable to overcome them over the course of the project (Boyle, 2015). Since the experiences of individuals within this first and second categories mirrored their first projects, we will focus on the third group, who experienced impeding barriers to their learning and curiosity.

Ironically, many of the difficulties that students saw as road blocks in the second project resembled or were related to those experienced and successfully overcome within their first projects. For example, participants experienced difficulties surrounding the structure of the project and course, a desire to do the project 'right', and the experience of hitting the wall again during their second Curiosity Projects. While students had demonstrated the skills and mindsets necessary within their first projects to overcome the barriers and challenges, they were unable to apply these abilities to overcome those faced in their second projects. Why did these barriers become roadblocks instead of speed bumps within participants' second projects?

In speaking with participants about their second projects it quickly became evident that those who experienced roadblocks had a regression in attitude, an absence of passion, and a lack of novelty, and were overwhelmed by self-inflicted social comparison. These key factors contributed to what caused speed bumps to transform into roadblocks and led to this subgroup of students describing their second projects as frustrating and disappointing failures.

Violations of expectations about the project and themselves

Students came into the second Curiosity Project with specific expectations about how their projects would unwind over the course of the semester (Boyle, 2015). Although the specific preconceptions that each individual participant experienced varied greatly, the presence and violation of these expectations had a significant role in turning barriers into roadblocks within the participants' projects. Participants' expectations were centered around not only the project as a whole, but also on their individual abilities and skills within the project.

Initially participants expected that the second projects would be essentially repeats of their first experiences (Boyle, 2015). These expectations not only left some participants feeling disappointed and frustrated, but also hindered their ability to be curious within the project. In hindsight participants were able to acknowledge that their expectations had a negative impact on their projects, but were unable to see the crippling effect during their second project.

...I went into my second [project] really anticipating that kinda life changing experience again and I didn't have that... you can never re-experience something for the first time (Boyle, 2015, p. 44).

In addition these students had expectations relating to their personal performance and identity as curious individuals (Boyle, 2015). The students participating in this second project were individuals who accurately identified themselves as curious individuals. They had participated in the first project and had positive, successful experiences. In addition, they had acted as learning facilitators and had actively guided other students successfully through the process. However, this success and sense of identity led to a perceived pressure to be curious within the second project. Sydney, for example, felt invigorated within her first project. She felt herself actively 'living' her curiosity and genuinely felt 'in love' with her topic choice. These experiences translated into expectations for how she would feel about the second project and her performance within it. When she did not feel this engagement and love within her second project she *"felt like I was failing myself at it the second time..."* (Boyle, 2015, p. 43).

Natalie had extremely high expectations for herself in terms of her abilities and performance within the course (Boyle, 2015). When she was unable to meet these expectations she discontinued her learning logs, which ultimately led to a sense of failure and disappointment with herself and her project.

...my expectations...were really high for myself...because it was almost like a point of pride...It's like I have to be able to do a good job on this. I did a good job the first time... (Boyle, 2015, p. 43).

Natalie's success in the first project crippled her when she began to struggle within the second one (Boyle, 2015). Unfortunately her pride and desire to succeed put a pressure on her that contributed to her experiencing difficulties as impassable roadblocks.

Participants expected that their second projects would be smooth sailing and immediately successful (Boyle, 2015). However, when reflecting on their first projects they mentioned difficulties and speed bumps and were able to touch on how they were able to overcome them. Not only was the expectation that the project would flow seamlessly inaccurate based on their first projects, but it ultimately contributed to a change in attitude relating to the project. They no longer faced a barrier and found a way to overcome it; instead it blocked their learning over and over again. In some senses, it appears that participants idealized the project, which caused increased pressure when their projects did not follow a clear and easy path.

Change in life space and future orientation

Although participants' expectations were legitimately based on their first experiences of the curiosity project, these preconceptions of the projects were no longer necessarily appropriate given the change in their 'life space' (Boyle, 2015). More specifically, when students began their second project they were now either in their third or fourth years of their undergraduate degrees and with this change in academic standing came a change in priorities and orientation, which contributed to the experience of barriers and challenges within the second curiosity project turning into roadblocks.

It was evident that a major factor in determining the nature of their second project was a pressure that seems to impact many third and fourth students, 'future orientation'. As many participants were in the process of applying for graduate school or determining their next career step, they became increasingly aware of their academic performance, their honours projects, and other resume boosting activities. As Mindy pointed out *"there's so much high stress..."* (Boyle, 2015, p. 46).

Many students felt overwhelmed by the stress of the surrounding academic environment and felt this influenced their curiosity projects despite understanding based on previous experience that the curiosity project was meant to be an escape from the overarching stresses and pressures of the academic system. Due to the change in life space and accompanying future orientation students felt these stresses along with a hyper focus on academic performance become a part of their projects.

...when I took the fourth year curiosity project I was applying for grad school...and doing my thesis concurrently...I think I was really aware during those weeks and those months that, okay, yes, this is the curiosity project and I shouldn't really be concerned with my marks and I should be focusing on my learning, but when you're actually actively going through that process at the same time it's pretty intimidating (Boyle, 2015, p. 46).

Over the course of the interview, Mindy repeatedly expressed the inhibiting presence of pressure and stress relating to her performance in not only her project and coursework, but also her honours project. In fact, these pressures resulted in her feeling as though she *"never had enough time...[or] enough drive to really engage in [her] curiosity"* (Boyle, 2015, p. 46).

Natalie, another fourth year, honours student, also experienced the detrimental influence that this future orientation had on her project. In fact, Natalie felt her project completely collapse within the first few weeks. A big contributing factor to this was the change in attitude and stress that she experienced:

I basically stopped doing [my project]... [because] things with my Honours and my other courses just started to take hold and I was constantly putting it off and I was so stressed (Boyle, 2015, p. 47).

The influence of this roadblock was not limited to fourth year, honours students, but was also experienced by some participants with third year standing. For example, Ashley also felt this future orientation affect her learning and curiosity within her second Curiosity Project:

...I was motivated, but...the third year... was just tough...I wanted to go to graduate school and I [had] to get good grades. So I was motivated, but I just wasn't curious enough to do my curiosity project [and] just to put time and effort into [it] (Boyle, 2015).

Through exploring participants' experiences of the second Curiosity Project it quickly becomes evident that there was a dramatic shift in perspective and focus from the first project to the second. Students no longer experienced the project as a break from other coursework, but instead felt the pressures of the prevailing academic system and a hyper focus on their future—both academic and professional—seep into every aspect of their projects. This naturally led to a change in attitude and outlook towards the project and had an influence in how speed bumps were transformed into roadblocks within the scope of the second project.

Absence of passion

Within the first project, many participants described the presence of a passion or 'magical curiosity'. For many this passion allowed them to enthusiastically take ownership over their learning, feel in love with their project, and feel curiosity pervade into every aspect of their lives.

...when you...have that [magical curiosity]...you can actually live your project [and] doing the work is really not that time consuming because you actually have fun doing it (Boyle, 2015, p. 44).

Within the second project these same individuals felt the absence of this passion have a detrimental influence on their ability to be curious. Instead of feeling passionate, participants felt the project become "more of a chore" (Boyle, 2015, p. 45). Even those who did not specifically refer to this absence of passion or 'magical curiosity' appeared to have experienced it from the tone and manner with which they described their projects. It is likely that this lack of passion was closely related to their high expectations and hyper focus on grades. In fact, it was a significant contributor to the presence of roadblocks within participants' second experiences.

Lack of novelty and meaningful challenge

Many students chose topics that were familiar to them in one aspect or another and for this reason they experienced a lack of novelty within their project. Participants who did this selected topic choices that were either 1) expansions of some aspect of their life (personal or academic) or 2) a continuation of their first curiosity project. While successful participants may have chosen these topics for various intrinsically meaningful reasons, those who struggled appear to have thought that these were 'safe' or 'easy' options for their projects. In the end, however, the lack of novelty had a significant role in shaping the outcome of their projects. Several participants felt discouraged, frustrated, and disappointed with how their projects were progressing. One participant, who chose a topic that was a continuation of her first, expressed this in the following way: *"...I wasn't challenged enough necessarily"* (Boyle, 2015, p. 51). On the other hand, another participant who chose her topic as an expansion of her personal life found the topic to be draining and difficult.

...it's hard because you look at this stuff, this is your life, this is your personality, this is you and it's... hard to research that and to be curious about that when you don't want to admit it to yourself... (Boyle, 2015, p. 51).

The close nature of the project also inhibited them because they *"had a lot of pre-existing knowledge."* (Boyle, 2015, p. 52). While they expected positive experiences to come from their choices, participants instead found their topics increasingly difficult. They were unable to find novelty and meaningful challenge to engage their curiosity within their topics, which contributed to the fact that the difficulties they faced took on the form of roadblocks which inhibited their curiosity.

Perceived social comparison

The group in which participants completed their second curiosity project naturally had a significant influence over how they experienced it. This group had a positive impact on some, who described the group as *'tight knit, supportive and 'therapeutic'* (Boyle, 2015, p. 48). However, others experienced a change in attitude due to a perceived social comparison.

While discussing her second project, Sydney repeatedly spoke of the pressure that she felt from the group. She felt an expectation or pressure from others to be curious. While she knew that this pressure was self-inflicted, she felt this social comparison have a dramatic influence on her project.

It was like there was all this pressure on me that hadn't been there before, but it wasn't directly on me. I just put it on myself because I felt like there was a lot expected from what other students knew about me... (Boyle, 2015, p. 49).

In a similar manner, other students felt themselves “*putting more value in what they [the other students] thought...*” (Boyle, 2015, p.50). The presence of this perceived pressure to impress their peers had a negative impact on participants' abilities to overcome barriers and challenges as they arose and contributed to the transformation of speed bumps into roadblocks. Instead of relying on the group for support and feedback, participants in some cases isolated themselves from this group. The irony of this finding is that the support and help was present within the project, but participants were overcome with a sense of paralyzing pride, which contributed to their inability or unwillingness to seek support from others and their perception of a social comparison within the group.

Conclusion

The Curiosity Project is an attempt to increase student enjoyment, passion, and motivation within a Social Psychology course. While the first project was successful in meeting these goals for all participants, the second experience varied significantly. Although some individuals had positive experiences within their second projects, this was not the case for all. Those who had successful second projects demonstrate that for some students a one-time experience can help shape their attitudes and approaches to learning. However, many participants within the second project were not able to overcome barriers as they arose and instead were faced with impeding roadblocks, which contributed to negative and frustrating experiences. While this sub-group of participants learned and had demonstrated appropriate ways to face difficulties as they arose within the first project, they were unable to transfer these skills to the second project. A number of factors appeared to contribute to this absence of skill transference, including the following: 1) a change in attitude based on experience, 2) a change in attitude based on life-space and future orientation, 3) the absence of passion, 4) the lack of novelty in topic choice, and, finally, 5) the influence of a perceived social comparison. Ultimately, these factors transformed barriers from speed bumps into roadblocks. While the presence of the roadblocks in the second curiosity project signifies that this project does not offer a long-lasting solution to the neglect of curiosity within the prevailing academic system, it has important, practical implications that need to be kept in mind for those looking to implement such a project into their curriculums.

Based on the experience of participants it is clear that we need to give students repeated opportunities to learn in an environment that fosters curiosity-based inquiry. By allowing students to have multiple experiences of this sort integrated into their education and life more broadly, we allow them to learn how to learn instead of teaching them to simply regurgitate information. Furthermore, by allowing students to see variations of this project in different contexts they may have the opportunity to learn skill transference.

Additionally, skills appear to be unable to overcome the influence of expectations and perceptions. While students had and knew how to use the skills to overcome barriers, in their second project they perceived themselves as powerless to make any change due to their perceptions and expectations of the project. This perception highlights that skills do not matter without a desire, willingness and environmental support to use them. While participants' experiences varied, all who struggled within the scope of the second project were unable to make use of the skills they had acquired for a multitude of reasons. By focusing on creating environments that support the learning of students and that make room for the improvement of their learning, we can help create a supporting atmosphere. It is, therefore, important for us to stop giving them the questions and the answers and instead to focus on

giving them the opportunities to learn how to ask those questions and seek the answers. It also means giving them these opportunities frequently and understanding that a one-time success does not necessarily carry over to future endeavors.

In summary, the Curiosity Project, while initially successful, is not a one-time fix. Students need multiple opportunities to engage in inquiry- and curiosity-based learning in varying situations and contexts to enable them to learn how to question and seek answers within all aspects of their lives. Finally, it is important to focus on fostering the desire, willingness and supportive environment to allow students to take part in this active, intrinsically motivated learning style. Ultimately, what we can do to encourage student engagement and motivation is to give them more projects like the Curiosity Project over the course of their education.

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Collaborative Exams for a Collaborative Classroom

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Abstract

Increasingly, collaborative learning is used during class periods, with students deepening their understanding by discussing questions with one or a few peers. Collaborative exams (a.k.a. two-stage exams) extend the practice to the exam setting. During the first stage, the students complete questions individually and hand in their work. During the second stage, they form groups of 3 or 4 students to revisit some or all of the exam questions, debating their answers and needing to arrive at a consensus before handing in their group answers.

During this session, those curious about this assessment technique got some first-hand experience with collaborative exams, learned about the related research, and got advice on how to use them.

Keywords: assessment; collaborative learning; group work; peer instruction

There's Nothing Like First-Hand Experience

Participants in this AAU Teaching Showcase session were in for a bit of a shock: they were given a test to write as soon as they entered the room! They were asked to complete individually a ten-question, multiple-choice science literacy test¹, using pen and paper. A nervous silence settled over the crowd, disturbed only by the scratching of pens and some sighs. After a few minutes, the tests were collected and participants were instructed to get into groups of 3 or 4. Each group was given a fresh question sheet and a scratch-card² on which to record their answers. Conversations took off immediately. Intense, focused conversations. Debates, arguments, explanations. Exactly what occurs when our students work on the group part of a two-stage exam.

Why would you use two-stage exams?

Thanks to this first-hand experience, participants were primed to learn about two-stage exams, though some were a little distracted by thoughts of moon phases and seasons.

There are several reasons to consider using two-stage exams (see e.g., Hodges 2004). First, they may create alignment between assessment and statements of value: 1) if collaborative learning is an integral

¹ The questions required reasoning, not simply recall.

² The scratch cards reveal a star when the correct answer's square is scratched.

part of classes, having a collaborative part in exams makes it clear that what is preached truly is valued; 2) if working well in groups is one of the course objectives, making it part of the assessment communicates that outcome statements on the syllabus are more than just words.

The opportunity to collaborate with peers during an exam may reduce test anxiety for some students. In addition, when scratch cards are used, the immediate feedback reduces post-exam anxiety because students leave the exam room knowing how well they did.

When students write two-stage exams, one would expect that, having studied for the exam, the students would be primed to have particularly rich discussions with their peers about the material, and also that discussing the exam questions immediately after a first, individual attempt - and seeing the correct answers if scratch-cards are used - would allow students to correct remaining misconceptions. All this should lead to increased learning and retention, but what does the research show?

What does the research say?

Session participants were not surprised to hear that studies and the author's personal experience agree: students' scores are higher on the group quiz than on the individual one (see e.g., Leight et al., 2012). In a large class, only a few students will earn a lower score on the group quiz.

Unfortunately, having become enthused about collaborative exams, session participants were disappointed to hear that studies don't agree on the impact of group exams on retention. In their literature review, Leight et al. (2012) point to two studies that claimed improved retention of course material, but four that found no such improvement. In a careful study in 2014, Ives further muddled the waters. He compared the individual results on questions similar to some on an initial exam, both 1-2 weeks and 6-7 weeks after that initial exam. At the 1-2 week mark, students who had worked in a group during the initial exam outperformed those who had worked individually. Hurrah! However, after 6-7 weeks, there was no difference. Drat. Longitudinal studies in education are notoriously difficult to perform, with many variables that cannot be controlled, but the bottom line is that, sadly, there is no clear, irrefutable evidence that collaborative exams lead to greater retention of course material.

What is not in doubt, and the reason why this author bothered to offer this session in the first place, is that there can be tremendous affective gains due to collaborative exams. As Pandey & Kapitanoff (2011) put it, collaborative testing is a "worthwhile technique" because "the positive experiences of increased camaraderie and anxiety reduction it engenders could constitute substantial long-term benefits in the form of increased confidence, motivation, and willingness to continue one's education." If a picture is worth a thousand words, is one anecdote worth a thousand data points? If so, sharing my colleague Ben Newling's experience of a student saying to him, in the middle of an exam, "This is fun!" should have been enough to convince attendees that collaborative exams could positively impact student attitudes, particularly for mandatory courses where students can be reticent participants.

What should you do when using collaborative exams?

A session isn't a workshop without some practical advice for implementation.

Based on this author's experience, the experience of colleagues, and the very practical paper by Wieman et al. (2014), the following recommendations and suggestions were shared:

- 1) Carefully explain to students beforehand why there will be a collaborative part to their exams. If they understand why you are doing it, they are more likely to be at ease with the approach.
- 2) Carefully explain to students beforehand exactly how the 2-stage exam will unfold. Knowing what to expect will alleviate anxiety and will help ensure that a minimal amount of time is wasted in the transition from individual to group work.
- 3) Reassure students that their grade cannot decrease as a result of the group component. Although it only rarely happens that a student's score on the group exam is lower than on their individual exam (see above), anxiety is greatly reduced when they know that their scores cannot be negatively impacted.
- 4) Decide what will be on the group part: all the questions? a subset of the questions? new questions? Let students know this before the exam date or at the start of the exam.
- 5) Decide in advance how the final grade will be calculated (% for each stage). Let students know this before the exam date or at the start of the exam.
- 6) Decide in advance how long the two stages will be and how much time you will allow for the transition. Let students know this before the exam date or at the start of the exam.
- 7) Decide in advance how the groups will be formed (number of students, who forms them and how). Let students know this before the exam date or at the start of the exam.
- 8) Decide if you will use scratch cards or not. Let students know this before the exam date and explain to them how the cards work. Better yet, use the cards for an in-class exercise before the exam. If scratch cards are used, decide if you will give partial credit for getting the answer right on a second or third try. Make this very clear to students.
- 9) If you have a large class, have assistants on hand to help make the transitions as smooth as possible.
- 10) Accept that a few students may not like doing group work. Think about how you want to handle this.

For instance, in a recent introductory astronomy class of 50 students,

- 1) Information about 2-stage exams was on the syllabus, discussed on the first day of term, and again during the class before the exam.
- 2) The logistics of the exam were described during the class before the exam.
- 3) Information to the effect that grades cannot decrease because of the group part was in the syllabus and reiterated during the class before the exam.
- 4) The individual part included 10 multiple-choice questions and a few other questions. The group part repeated the multiple-choice questions, though question order and answer choice order were changed, and one of the other questions was also included.
- 5) 87% of the exam grade was from the individual part and 13% from the group part.
- 6) The individual part was 30 minutes long. The group part was 15 minutes long. Five minutes were allotted for the transition (more than sufficient), leaving another 5 minutes as a buffer wherever it was needed.
- 7) Once the individual sheets had been collected, the students were asked to stand up, get into groups of 3 or 4 of their choosing, and only sit down once they were in such a group. Students who remained standing because they were alone or in a pair were merged into groups. No attempt was made to form groups in advance.
- 8) Scratch cards were used for multiple-choice questions. An in-class exercise had been done using scratch cards. Each group had one scratch card and they were told to entrust it to the calmest

person in the group. They earned 1 point for getting the correct answer on the first try and 0.5 for getting it right in the second try. This information was written on their instructions sheet and communicated verbally. In retrospect, having this information projected on the screen at the front of the class during the exam would have been a good idea.

- 9) Logistics were manageable without the help of a TA: for a class of 50, there are only 12-17 groups.
- 10) Every single class period included work in pairs or small groups so the students were used to it. By the time the exam rolled around, they had almost all found people with whom they were comfortable working. Two particularly shy and quiet students were allowed to work in a pair rather than a larger group, though they were told that this probably wouldn't be to their advantage.

Did we reach our goals?

By the end of the session, participants understood the purpose of collaborative exams, were aware of the main research results related to such exams, and were sufficiently aware of key practical matters that they should be able to factor them in when planning a collaborative exam.

Unfortunately, due to suboptimal time management during the session, participants had not developed a draft plan for using 2-stage exams before our time ran out. This was therefore left as a post-conference exercise for the participants.

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Undergraduate Professional Development Course: Marketable Skills

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Abstract

Which skills do students require to become productive members of society? Recent literature suggests there are significant gaps between student and employer perceptions of important skills. A similar gap appears between employer and higher education providers' perceptions. This gap is the widest in Canada among industrialized countries. Many credible sources discuss the need for 'soft' skills. This new and innovative Professional Development (PD) course is substantially different from most offered at the undergraduate level. It links education with the skills valued by the workplace and uses three main components: career vision board and action plan; Emotional Intelligence development; and integration of the widely respected *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Despite residing in the School of Business, PD's value applies to all disciplines because the life skills emphasized are relevant wherever the students' life journey takes them—into engineering/scientific fields, or into profit or not for profit enterprises. A brief review of recent literature noting specific desired skills is presented. Course components and critical success factors will also be discussed.

Keywords: skills; soft skills; Emotional Intelligence; employability; work ethic; career mapping; Strong College Career Profile; *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Introduction

This report aims to share findings from the current literature that informed the innovative nature of PD. The theme of this conference is "In cahoots: building communities to get it done". Perspective from the OECD (2014) may help illuminate what 'it' means. Their Education and Skills Online Assessment tool measures cognitive and non-cognitive skills, as well as behavioral competencies. These are included in the design of PD. By reaching out to our stakeholder community we collaborated to provide knowledge in context with 23 guest speakers who shared perspectives and facilitated tangible connections. Together, we are able to get it done and be pivotal to student success.

The skills desired by employers as suggested by the literature have significantly changed over the past decade. They are no longer merely the 'hard skills' of data analysis, using Excel, or undertaking quantifiable research methods. They are more than a strong focus on critical thinking. Today and into the future, 'soft skills' (communications, team work, managing emotions, work ethic, and time management to name a few) are suggested to be the points of difference that allow people to successfully contribute to society. McKinsey & Company suggest a major gap is also evident between employer and post-secondary providers' perceptions of these skills. An opportunity for educators to

reassess their course designs is presented. This report outlines the PD course components that develop these skills and the rationale for including them in its design.

Summary of Literature

A similar theme appears throughout the literature. A review of nine major reports published since 2013 suggests the need to improve soft skills. Information from these credible, global sources (The Conference Board of Canada, McKinsey & Company, The World Economic Forum, the United Nations, and the OECD among others) should be considered when designing courses. These consistent views may help educators assist students in becoming more productive members of society. A summary of the literature follows.

There is a significant gap between student and employer expectations of which skills are relevant in today's workplace (Grant, 2016). "Despite Canada having one of the highest levels of educational attainment in the world, employers regularly complain about a lack of skills" (p. i). An emphasis on soft skills is generally not what students, and sometimes educators, expect. His report substantiates the claim that employers value soft skills. It indicates that the top four desired skills are: *positive attitude, communication, teamwork, and work ethic*. He contends there is need for "changes in programs, stronger links between PSE institutions and employers, and improved labour market information that improve skills outcomes and workplace performance" (p. v). Knowledge by itself is not sufficient; it must be applied with relevant education. It is noted that the most prevalent form of partnership between business and post-secondary institutions are internships/coop programs. PD has significant links with our Co-op Program.

Furthermore, there are significant differences in perspective when discussing the state of readiness of Canadian graduates for the workplace (Mourshad, 2016). The data indicate that 83% of education providers agree that graduates/new hires are adequately prepared, while 34% of employers and 44% of youth agree. His findings indicate that employers view *work ethic, English proficiency, and teamwork* as far more important than education providers' view of the same. He says "the disconnect between education providers and employers is larger in Canada than in other countries" (p. 10). This may have implications for innovation and employment levels, in addition to providing the opportunity for educators to reassess program and course designs.

A starting point to gauge the status of desired skills may be the OECD's (2014) Education and Skills Online Assessment Tool. It "measures a set of cognitive and non-cognitive skills that individuals need for full participation in modern societies" (p. 4). The non-cognitive component focuses on the use of skills, behavioral competencies, career interest and intentionality, as well as subjective well being and health. This instrument includes behavioral competencies such as *conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, and the openness to experience*. These skills, behavioral competencies, career intentions, and well being are included in PD. It would be interesting to measure a student's skills when entering university and how they may have changed by their final year of study.

To help us live together and productively enter the workplace The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2014) discusses desired skills. Their research suggests *critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and empathy* are important. Empathy is an aspect of Emotional Intelligence which is a major component in PD.

Emotional Intelligence is a set of four skills that can be improved over one's lifetime. These are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 2013).

Emotional Intelligence is suggested to be more important to success in life than intellectual intelligence. This is an advanced concept undergraduates find challenging to appreciate at their early stage of life. Davies, et al. (2016) concur with Goleman's view and suggest that the top three future skills for 2020 are *social intelligence, novel and adaptive thinking, and sense making*.

Goleman's (2013) work is supported by a 2014 study conducted by the Hay Group. It found that new graduates do not value professional skills in the workplace, yet 91% of employers believe employees with refined soft skills advance faster. This aligns with Mourshad's (2016) findings that only one-third of employers agree that youth are prepared for the workplace. The Hay Group (2014) interviewed 450 business leaders and the same number of recent graduates in the U.S., China, and India. Being *collaborative, empathetic, open to diversity, a good listener and a clear communicator* were deemed to be important drivers of advancement from the point of view of hiring managers. Interestingly, this report links Emotional Intelligence to advancing faster in the workplace regardless of the nature of that work.

We often say in a business class that 'change is the only constant'. How students approach their changing environments may be an outcome of character. *Character* may be determined by curiosity, initiative, persistence/grit, adaptability, leadership, and social and cultural awareness. The World Economic Forum (2016) published "The Top 10 Skills for 2020". *Cognitive flexibility* is one of note. PD aims to improve character and cognitive flexibility by using reflective exercises. Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning indicated reflection can play a major role in learning.

Course Components

As we see from the literature there are major gaps between student, employer, and education provider perspectives of what are important skills for success in life. Our innovative PD course was redesigned to foster self-awareness and enhance employability. This applies to many career paths in the scientific, not for profit, and profit orientated organizations. Feedback suggests content is relevant regardless students' current areas of interest so it has appeal to a more general audience than the business students for whom it was developed. PD has three main themes that directly reflect the findings from current literature.

1. Career Vision Board and Mapping

Often, students are uncertain of future career directions and unaware of the behaviors required for success in the workplace. Sometimes they feel they already have the skills, but they do not know or greatly underestimate the scope of needed improvement. We use the Strong College Career Profile (Prince, 2012), which matches students' preferences with those who say they are happy in 140+ careers. This standardized instrument also provides information of possible majors and courses that may be appropriate to a student's preferences. We also ask students to create a Vision Board with Career Action Plan. The need for this component is supported by the OECD's (2014) report which noted that career and intentionality are important. Mourshad (2016) also suggested the need to align personal interests with future career areas.

2. Emotional Intelligence

The average level of Emotional Intelligence in the PD class was 67%. Considerable effort is devoted to practical examples that illuminate the relevance of Emotional Intelligence and discuss how it is a skill that can be improved over one's lifetime. External consultants discuss the topic and self-assessment instruments are used. The need for this component is supported by the work of Goleman (2013), and

the reports from the World Economic Forum (2016), the OECD (2014), the Hay Group (2014), and the University of Phoenix (Davies et al., 2016).

3. *'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People'*

This widely respected personal and professional development book by Dr. Stephen Covey (2013) provides a foundation to improve character, resilience, and work ethic. Students write a personal mission statement and use an innovative time management tools with "SMART" (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time Bound) goals. Interestingly, almost thirty years ago Covey devoted the seventh Habit to improving the balance between emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs. The findings of the Conference Board (Grant, 2016), United Nations (UNESCO, 2014), the World Economic Forum (2016), and the OECD (2014) suggest the skills that are discussed within the '7 Habits'. We use individual and/or team assignments to complement each Habit.

Learning in PD is highly personalized through self-assessment and reflective exercises. Assignments facilitate perception of strengths, weaknesses, and fit in today's workplace regardless of the students' discipline. Standardized instruments assess career preferences and Emotional Intelligence. Aggregate class results were de-briefed by certified counselors. If a student wished individual, confidential discussion of their personal results, the counsellors would do so. This choice was available to any student.

The three most highly rated events in PD were: 1) Employer's Panel, 2) Alumni Panel, and 3) Co-op Program discussion. The perspectives of 20+ guest speakers enhanced the learning experience. Employers included not for profit organizations, consulting firms, small businesses, large multi-national firms, and organizations with a scientific/engineering mission. Student feedback suggested that the guests made learning 'real'. Guests tried to realistically set student expectations as to the needs of today's workplace. It is often a paradigm-shifting experience when students hear employers and Alumni state that soft skills may be more important in the hiring process than a student's GPA.

Critical success factors for this course include continued support from the internal and external stakeholder community. Internally, our partners are collegiate faculty, Student Services, Counselling, Athletics, Operations, and the Co-op Program. Collaboration with the external community provided practitioner perspective in career mapping and Emotional Intelligence. This complex course offers a highly personalized learning experience in a class of over 100.

In Conclusion

PD is a new, innovative course which is substantially different from most offered at the undergraduate level. It is highly personalized to provide meaningful insights students can leverage when seeking employment. Reflective exercises help students make sense of the workplace and their fit within it thereby reducing some personal anxiety. The self-diagnostic tools build professional and personal capacity. Communication, interpersonal dynamics, and work ethic skills are improved.

Enhancement of marketable skills is timely regardless of students' area of study. PD has three main components: career vision board and action plan; Emotional Intelligence skills development; and integration of the widely respected '7 Habits of Highly Effective People'. We foster connections with the community through guest speaker workshops to ensure applied learning and relevance to today's workplace needs. Without partners in our Co-Op Program, Career Services, Entrepreneurial Centre, Operations, Alumni, Employers and many others, this visionary course would not be possible. Outcome measures suggest most students appreciate the need for PD and the skills it enhances. Future directions

may include increased synergies with the Arts, Science, and Business Co-op Programs. The audience could be broadened to include students from other faculties as everyone needs behavioral and non-cognitive skills for success in life.

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Collaborate, Conspire, Commune: Academy-Based Activism as Mentorship in Marginalized Communities

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Abstract

Working with students and youth in our communities often employs a model of provision—from those of us with academic credentials and the benefits of age, to those of us who are young, or working toward credentials (whether that be formal educational credentials or less formalized skill development). While that model has benefits, what aims to ‘empower’ youth can alienate, and those in the role of ‘providing’ can end up depleted. This report outlines a philosophy of activist educational and community-building practice with youth and students in marginalized communities whereby egalitarian collaboration and co-conspiring between those in different roles meets three central aims: 1) Strengthening the likelihood of success for education-based social justice initiatives; 2) Reciprocal education between university communities and the larger communities of which they are members; 3) Providing mentorship, skill development, and tools for building sustainable communities to students and youth in marginalized positions in a reciprocal model of cross-generational care.

The focus in this philosophy is to foreground how different resources are attached to different structural positions, and strategize together on how to harness those resources in active collaboration toward goals arrived at through consensus. Evidence of the effectiveness of this approach is provided through a case-study of the Trans Needs Committee (started at Memorial University in 2011), which provides referrals, support, and education on gender diversity cultural competence, while providing youth with skills and experience and actively building sustainable community for all.

Keywords: social justice; mentorship; transgender; community; marginalized communities; equity; public engagement; reciprocity

Introduction and Outline

Public engagement has become a central aim and oft-repeated buzz-phrase in contemporary academic settings as universities aim to make their relevance more legible outside the logics of the ivory tower. Making clear what links there are (and can be) between our teaching and mentorship practices and the building of community and resources that actively foster community engagement, participation, and social justice work is key to our being better able to facilitate effective public engagement and to understanding more explicitly how our role as educators can be envisioned and put into practice in ways that extend beyond the walls of the classroom.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a model of community engagement that works to mentor, build resilient community, and develop skills within marginalized communities while concurrently providing social justice education and awareness to the larger community and the university. More specifically, in order to describe and illustrate the effectiveness of this model, this paper reports the philosophy and practice that informs and grounds the approach of the Trans Needs Committee (TNC), a project started at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and which I have worked with since its inception 5 years ago. The TNC has developed to combine social justice work, education, mentorship, and community building work in and for those of us who are transgender both on and off campus. Examination of the work and achievements of the TNC will be used to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the collaborative model presented. The hope is that by unpacking and articulating the philosophy and practice that can be seen in the TNC, fellow educators interested in furthering their public engagement practice—particularly in connection to social justice work will have more tools to help in the project of articulating with clarity what we are getting up to when we step outside of the classroom and into our larger communities as professors and community members.

Before presenting the collaborative model that will be discussed, it is important to outline the problems or issues that this model of educational community-building aims to address in order to provide context for the aims of the model and philosophy that grounds it. After having discussed the collaborative model and its grounding philosophy in general terms, I will then move on to more fully introduce the TNC, its membership and methods, and discuss how the accomplishments of the TNC exemplify the effectiveness of the model and its philosophy in addressing the problems sometimes faced when using provision-based models.

The Problem with Provision

Working with students and youth in our communities, whether inside or outside the classroom often employs a somewhat limited model of provision. In this model those of us with academic credentials and the benefits and experience of age are seen as providing resources and supports to those of us who are young, or who are working toward credentials (whether formal educational credentials or less formalized skill development). Of course this model has benefits: it is one way to redistribute or share resources, particularly if those resources are cultural capital, since that is usually what is 'delivered' in both formal and informal education. In other words teachers supply students with knowledge, and receiving that knowledge is understood to empower students and youth. Of course, we also understand that teaching can include mentorship, where what is delivered is not just information, but a living example after which youth can model themselves, or from whom youth can learn through active observation and interaction—but this too is the sharing of cultural capital. Even though the knowledge gained via mentorship is not formalized by way of credentials, it is one of the ways people receive the informal cultural capital of knowing how to navigate different situations.

If we think more deeply about forms of capital connected to structural positions (see Bourdieu, 1986), we see that this model can fall short in the redistribution of other types of capital. Symbolic capital (e.g. prestige, reputation, authority, etc.) economic capital (e.g. money), and social capital (e.g. access to social networks) tend not to shift when applying a model of provision. The prestige or authority of the mentor or teacher is not shared to youth in ways that afford them symbolic capital beyond that attributed to those who are students. There is no redistribution of economic capital in the process of teaching or mentorship that benefits youth, and neither is increased social capital a clear or guaranteed outcome for those in the position of being taught or mentored. Thus we have a model that falls short because it only reliably provides one type of capital, and in that it fails to support all three components which build capacity: redistribution, recognition, and participation (Prince, 2009).

While a model of provision aims to ‘empower’ youth this underlying structure can alienate younger people from their own ability to build capacity. In addition, when we stick to this model of provision, particularly when both mentor and mentee are members of that same marginalized group for whom social justice and human rights are being sought, those in the role of ‘providing’ can end up depleted, burnt out, and feeling unappreciated or ‘harvested’ by the people they hope to assist. And as Chen and Gorski articulate, social justice and human rights activists are particularly susceptible to ‘burn out’ (2015). This is connected to the fact that the provision model defines those who are mentors or educators as pillars for those receiving guidance. Being a mentor is understood to be a position of stability. A mentor is a source of resources, knowledge, and guidance. As such, a mentor is both a resource and an authority. Alongside this, a provision model positions youth as recipients, as lacking stability, as off kilter, or ‘at risk’.

We see that a provision model has a very particular set of power relations at play. Even though these relations can have benefits—there are moments when people need to ask for and receive resources, and when mentors are members of the marginalized group the youth belong to they can also be sources of hope or inspiration. But as I’ll elaborate, a provision model is perhaps too static, and can be limiting, both to the people involved, and in the possibilities for community it can allow.

After all, in a model of provision, the aim is to ‘fill-up’ the recipients, to ‘set them right’ to make them stable. It is also a model that presumes ongoing stability of mentors and educators without accounting for how that stability might require replenishment, as those who are understood to be ‘in need’ come calling, over and over again, and then move along once they are sufficiently ‘filled’. One of the implications of this model is that it requires those of us who are younger to *be in a position*, and *accept* a position of being inherently lacking, to be understood as being a problem that needs to be solved, and in some ways, to stop being who or where we are in order for the model to be deemed successful. For those of us who are mentors and community role models, this inherent construction of the role does not adequately account for how forces of structural inequality (oppression, discrimination, erasure, etc.) can continue to put adults ‘off kilter’ and ‘at risk’, and in need of support—and that is why I characterize it as alienating. Another implication is that it is a model that can contribute to burn out for those of us who are ‘elders’ or mentors. It is a model where what mentors do is ‘work to put themselves out of business’. As Smith and Drower note in their discussion of social workers in South Africa who share social-structural context with those whom they serve, providers must “...pay particular attention to their own levels of coping, resilience, and protective and risk factors if they are to be able to render effective and appropriate services” (2008: 137). As mentors and community educators who are elders in the communities we mentor, if our focus is on provision, we succeed when individual youth stop coming to us because we have nothing left to give that they require, and while that success can be satisfying, it can also leave us bereft.

For these reasons I contend that even though provision can have benefits, the vision underlying it can be demoralizing for ongoing relations between those involved, and the model is not sufficiently able to build ongoing and resilient community. And at the end of the day, when we are members of marginalized communities, not having sustainable resilient community to catch us when we fall is part of how many of us end up in trouble, youth and elders alike.

An Alternative Collaborative Philosophy

This report now turns to outlining an alternative philosophy of activist educational and community-building practice with youth and students and three related central aims. The first aim is to strengthen education-based social justice initiatives. The second aim is to create reciprocal education both between

group members, and between university communities and the larger communities of which *they* are members. The third aim is to enact reciprocal cross-generational care to build and sustain resilient community. The focus on resilience in this model draws from aspects of resilience theory as outlined by Ungar (2008), particularly his discussion of resilience including "...the capacity of individuals and their families and communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways for resources to be shared" (22-23) as well as the importance of focusing on youths' strengths, and the foundational nature of social justice in successful development.

In contrast to a provision model, the philosophy grounding this alternative, collaborative model works with the understanding that it is not only youth who have needs, and not only mentors and teachers who provide resources. This brings to the foreground how different resources are attached to different structural positions and roles. Success becomes defined in different ways with this model, as groups work and strategize together on how to harness those resources in active collaboration toward goals arrived at through consensus that meet the needs of all who are involved. Since everyone is understood as bringing something to the table, no one is only receiving, or only giving. Instead, no matter who we are, we give what we can, and do what we can, and acknowledge that there are differences among us. In fact, it is *those differences that allow us to achieve our goals*.

Introducing the TNC

Evidence of the effectiveness of this collaborative approach is provided through reflection on the Trans Needs Committee of Memorial University, a group which now provides referrals, support, and education on gender diversity cultural competence, while concurrently providing youth with skills and experience and actively building sustainable community for all who are involved. The TNC was founded in 2011, and spearheaded by an undergraduate student. I provide this reflection from my own experience as a member of the TNC from its founding days. From its inception, the TNC has been a collaborative effort of undergraduate students, graduate students, professors, and community members outside of academia. The initial central aim of the TNC was extremely broad: to assess and attend to 'trans needs' on campus and in the larger community. We did not know when we began what the work would entail.

Membership and Methods

To give focus to this reflection, I now turn to more detailed examination of the membership and methods used by the TNC. While membership and methods will be discussed in turn, they are, in practice, deeply entwined. That is, who is involved with the TNC is central to how the methods used have developed. As stated earlier, the TNC includes those who are undergraduate and graduate students, professors, as well as youth and adult community members from outside the university. Members are predominantly (but not exclusively) trans and non-binary folk, and becoming a member does not have any formal process, but is self-selected.

Structurally, the TNC has a central core of two to four members who call meetings, answer emails, provide administrative support, and oversee the projects and agenda the TNC is working with at any point in time. That core, often thought of as an organizing committee of co-coordinators, has shifted over the years. Being involved with this organizing committee is an emergent process. That is, those who take on this role are those who show up and consistently perform the required work of co-ordinating the projects and tasks of the group. There is no formal process of selection or application. Instead, the core group emerges organically from who is regularly able and willing to do the required work. People enter and exit this core depending on personal and life circumstances (how much time they have to give, how much energy, etc.). This emergent process has served the TNC well through core

members moving away, graduating, returning, taking on new jobs, navigating personal crises, etc. When one needs to step back, another steps in from the larger surrounding circle of members. Those members of the TNC that surround the core group include those who provide workshops and diversity training talks, participate in the work of hosting events, perform research, create resources, and any other tasks that the TNC decides to pursue and finally, there are those who are involved in our community brainstorming sessions, who are central to how decide what on earth we will get up to next. Having outlined our membership, and the roles we take up, I now turn to discussion of our methods.

The TNC's mandate is to assess and attend to trans needs—including the needs of the committee's members. And it is clear, as I noted earlier, that building community is something that attends to a need felt by all of us—a need for a place where we feel we are seen, a place where interaction does not require us to explain the ground we stand on, a place where we can talk about what we need, where it is okay to feel shaky, and a place to attend to one another while we do this larger work. In short, this need is for a social space where none of us is required to be the resource provider while the other is always the recipient. So we collaborate, we conspire, and we commune.

Collaborate

Collaborating simply means that we brainstorm together, complain together, listen to one another and share the workload according to what resources each of us has to offer and what is required. Tasks are not attached definitively to one person or another, and any authority granted has to do with acknowledging what different members bring to the table for the different tasks at hand, rather than that authority residing in a particular organizational role. Instead our work is always a joint effort. From assessing needs, to designing ways to meet those needs, and providing resources or contributing to community initiatives, none of us speaks for or acts independently on behalf of the group.

Conspire

While collaboration includes all the practical aspects of sharing work, conspiring is more specifically about collaborative strategizing to maximize resources. Conspiring is a practice of setting goals based on the resources we currently have access to through our active members, and making action plans for how to meet those goals and enact initiatives in ways that make the most of our collective strengths and offerings. Using the term 'conspire' is a way to flag that in this practice, we actively acknowledge how to best mobilize the constellation of resources that attending members bring to the table. For example, as a professor, I rarely have time to offer (time being a scarce resource for those of us in academia). But what I can offer is symbolic capital, a social prestige associated with my title that can help open doors for my TNC collaborators, even when I haven't the time to step through and do the work with them once the door is open.

Commune

This third aspect of TNC practice is central to tying our collaborative, conspiratorial work together in ways that ensure that doing social justice education and advocacy work helps to meet the needs of TNC members for our own support and building of community. Here we are cognizant of the call that "Integrating support efforts into daily organizing is a crucial element of working for change" (Anonymous, 2008). What it means for us in practice, is that we emphasize the importance of sharing meals together, and often have potluck meetings, most often held in someone's home. Part of eating together while we collaborate and conspire is that we engage in building our community of mutual support, so that our work acknowledges that trans needs are not just points of crisis, but also include the need for comradery, community, and calm. Other components of 'communing' include checking in

with one another and passing tasks as needed. Check-ins often happen after training sessions (these can sometimes be truly exhausting) or might be about what is going on in our lives as individuals, and about what we personally need in order to keep on keeping on, or in the face of difficult political news that affects trans folks. Checking in is a way to actively support one another, as is the passing of tasks. With this latter component, we openly acknowledge that no one is always able to do everything. Rather than a member stepping back from something that needs to be done being seen as a failure, it is simply an opportunity to pass the task. None of us is irreplaceable for getting the work done, and each of us is able to set the boundaries we need to in approaching the seemingly never-ending work of social justice advocacy and education.

Achievements as Supporting Evidence of Effectiveness

And the work gets done. Perhaps the best argument for this collaborative model is not made through articulating the philosophy, aims, and methods, but by sharing the achievements that putting all of that into practice has allowed. Since June of 2011 when the first open meeting was held to brainstorm community needs and resources this is an incomplete list of what we have accomplished:

- Provided dozens of workshops each year on gender diversity and trans cultural competency. These workshops have been done on campus, for social service organizations, for medical professionals, for community organizations, and in high schools.
- Partnered with other community organizations to fund, orchestrate and implement professionally accredited workshops
- Built community links with community organizations and social service provision agencies
- Provided referrals for individual people seeking support and services
- Conducted a policy scan of North American Universities regarding gender diversity and inclusion for Memorial University's Deputy Provost of Student Affairs and Services (a scan that we have disseminated and shared with others seeking that information to help implement more inclusive policies on campus across the country).
- Provided consultation services to offices across the university, and to organizations in the larger community, as well as the provincial government
- Organized community events (panel discussions, cultural events, etc.)
- Conducted a 'Bathroom Scan' of Memorial University to assess the safety and accessibility of bathrooms on campus for trans and gender diverse community members.
- Hosted other educators, activists, and artists and included them in our practice of communing to support one another in this shared social justice work
- Supported one member through a successful court challenge
- Weathered and responded flexibly to shifts in core and peripheral membership
- Became recognized on campus, by the government, and in the larger community as a resource for training, education, advocacy, and other initiatives
- Supported each other through completion of degrees, changing jobs, losing jobs, finding jobs, leaving school and returning to school, navigating healthcare, managing grief and mourning and helped each other build transferable skills through active experience.

In this list of achievements, we can see how all three components of capacity building (Prince, 2009) are attended to. *Redistribution* occurs through the sharing and building of economic capital (as trans youth involved in the TNC receive an honorarium for workshops they facilitate, and have also translated their cultural capital gained through the TNC into paid employment). Cultural capital is also provided, both in terms of the skills members build in enacting our strategies collaboratively, and the formalization of

having those skills be legible as line items on a CV (academic or otherwise, for youth members and adults alike). And by harnessing and redistributing the symbolic capital we have built as a recognized and respected community group, and creating an active network of personal support and professional networks that contribute to the social capital of TNC members. Again, none of these benefits are limited to youth—instead, youth, students, mentors and other adults all benefit from the ways that this model navigates the transformation and redistribution of capital through active collaborative practice.

Recognition is also accomplished through the work performed by the TNC, both for individual members who are recognized for their contributions, and better understood because of the awareness trainings we provide that draw from our own experiences, but also for who we are as members of a community working for the recognition of trans rights. Finally, the TNC actively provides members with opportunities for *participation* in building the policy that has effects on trans lives through our role in providing consultations and training to medical professionals, government, social service providers, and community organizations and through researching and disseminating reports that are used to help build gender inclusive policies.

And this list is not a limit, it is just what the TNC has done so far. Who knows where this model will take the TNC, or who will be part of the work along the way. But if the TNC continues to employ this model, to *collaborate* in assessing trans needs and available resources, to *conspire* on how best to strategize to meet collaboratively set goals, and to actively *commune* with each other in the process, I am confident that community capacity will attend to the needs of members across generations, and continue to provide a model that can help inform activist educational community building initiatives and contribute to building resilient community and cross-generational care.

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Reconciliation and Indigenizing the Curriculum: Stories from an Indigenous Teacher and Graduate Student

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Abstract

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada published its final report and ninety-four calls to action. In light of this publication, many university administrations have taken up the task of implementing these calls to action on their campuses; however, the trickle-down effect to faculty, staff, and students is a long process and requires patience. Whereas reconciliation requires the building of a sustainable relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples, a first step toward reconciliation is the sharing of our stories. Through the art of storytelling, this presentation aims to provide a context for reconciliation, the integration of Indigenous knowledges into the curriculum, and the TRC in general. Three stories from the presenter's lived experience of being Indigenous in academia and his professional practice working with the James Bay Cree are shared in the hope of sparking ideas in the listener around how to engage campus communities in thinking about Indigenous knowledge, building partnerships with Indigenous students, and implementing the TRC's recommendations.

Keywords: reconciliation; Indigenous curriculum; storytelling; Indigenous knowledges; Indigenous education

Introduction

My name is Adrian Downey; I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University, formerly a teacher in the Cree School Board of Northern Québec, and a member of the Qalipu band of Mi'kmaq First Nations situated in Western Newfoundland. My Mi'kmaq grandfather's name was Nolan Bennett, and his father was Edward Benoit; they were fishermen who lived most of their lives in the Bay of St. George's area. On the other side of my family I am of Irish decent.

Now that you know who I am, let me start with a story. My uncle told it to me. He wouldn't want me to mention his name here, but if this story changes something for you, it is him you should thank, not me.

Story One: Learning by Doing

It starts in rural Newfoundland some forty years ago. My grandfather had been having problems with his chimney and, after consulting with his sons and brothers, decided it needed to be removed and replaced. My uncle said it would be an easy job and that he could come down to do it on the weekend if that worked for my grandfather. My grandfather said that would be fine and they agreed. The following weekend, the two men worked at removing the chimney block by block. It was tedious work, but my

grandfather was doubtlessly happy to have help and probably very proud of his son for being able to help him with such things. Before I go on, I should tell you that my grandfather was a saintly man. He would never hurt a fly, never raised his voice, and my family still debates if he ever said a swear word in his life. That is what makes what happens next all the more exciting. When they had finally removed all the chimney stones, my grandfather breathed a sigh of relief and promptly asked my uncle what they should do next. My uncle responded, “I’m not sure. I’ve never done this before.” By all accounts, my grandfather’s face turned red and he stomped around the house asking the forgiveness of God for his thoughts.

Despite my grandfather’s dismay, I like that story. I like it because it reminds me of the importance of trial and error. My uncle is now in his late fifties and the kind of man that can make or fix just about anything. On top of that, he’s also a capable musician on several instruments and knows more about the history of Newfoundland than some of the scholars I’ve met. And, to be frank with you, I’m not 100% sure if he can read. He learned from doing. He might not have known how to assemble a chimney when he walked to my grandfather’s house that day but, by the time he left, he could. This is one of the core principles of Indigenous learning that I applied during my time with the James Bay Cree as a music teacher, and something the value of which I am continually trying to articulate to my professors now as a graduate student.

Learning through doing is an important lesson for those thinking about how to move forward with reconciliation; but it also illuminates the tragedy of the past. Here, I could remind you about the paternalistic relationship that First Nations have suffered from our designation as wards of the states (Killen, 2016), and the educational value of letting someone fail and learn from their mistakes (Montessori, 1967)—something of which several generations were robbed due to the institutionalizing presence and harsh punishment of residential schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), but to be so direct wouldn’t be true to the way I see the world. The way I was taught was through story, and that has become my way of understanding most things.

Story Two: Reconciliation

This story is mine. I was taking a course at my current university and the professor of the class had assigned us the task of presenting a learning theory of our choosing from a preset list. I noticed he had included “Indigenous learning”, though he had not on previous versions of his course syllabus. I figured as *the* Indigenous person in the room I should probably investigate the topic and present on it. However, when I followed the links he provided on the topic I was fraught with anxiety. He wasn’t quoting from Graveline (1998), Battiste (2013), or any of the other well-known Canadian scholars who write on Indigenous learning; rather, he was working from a 12-page document from Australia found within the top 4 results when I put the term “Indigenous learning” into a search engine. I was insulted. But, in a moment of divine intervention—perhaps remembering the words of my Elders that it isn’t my place to judge—I simply asked him if I could write a paper instead, to which his reply was, “Yes.” The result was a strengthened relationship between my professor and I, a presentation and paper that was thoroughly researched and, by most accounts, more informative than the original reading, and a 12-page review of the paper from the *Journal of American Indian Education* that has taught me more about scholarship than my entire master’s degree had to that point. That’s reconciliation.

I like this story because it contains multitudes of truth when it comes to integrating Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. Modern Indigenous scholars such as Shawn Wilson (2008) and Margaret Kovach (2009) have articulated the Indigenous way of knowing as being relational. That is to say, the universe is made up of a series of relationships and one’s knowledge is made up of one’s understanding

of those relationships and the interconnectedness of all living things. In the Mi'Kmaq language we would use the word *Netukulimik*, though in English this word has more environmental connotations (Battiste, 2016), emphasizing our sacred relationship with the land. That sacred relationship stems from the idea that the plants, animals, and rocks are all our brothers and sisters (Sable & Francis, 2012). For me, *Netukulimik* has always begun with having and maintaining right relationships with our fellow human beings. That's what my professor did so well in that story: he saw or sensed the hurt I felt and gave me the space to respond in a way I felt comfortable. We restored our relationship and we were both able to learn from the experience.

That is what the TRC's calls to action are asking for: a restoration of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples. In my mind, when it comes to implementing the calls to action in the classroom, whether it be elementary or graduate, that is what we should be striving toward: right relations. Reconciliation is a huge project, and the advice I have been repeatedly given on the topic is to find one small way you can make a difference and to keep paddling your canoe until it comes to fruition. Some people make films or write songs, like *The Secret Path* (Downie & Lemire, 2016), others try to eliminate red tape or work on retention plans for Aboriginal students. My approach to reconciliation is the same as my approach to Indigenizing the curriculum: I try to share my stories and listen to the stories of others, allowing those personal narratives to disrupt hurtful and reductive dominant narratives.

Story Three: The Wonder of Complexity

After I graduated from my bachelor of education, I took a teaching job with the Cree School Board. I was a young teacher with many new ideas, and I thought teaching in an Indigenous community would give me a chance to reconnect with my heritage and work actively with the Indigenous pedagogies I had learned about in university. I started my class with the storytelling traditions I had been taught as a young man, kept my classroom light and fun, and tried to get to know my students. All was fine and good with this approach until the inevitable behaviour issues started. What I would have called "kids being kids" was perceived by the administration as "poor classroom management" and I was encouraged to enforce the school rules with more rigour. Combined with this was the uncomfortable curriculum control of an American scripted reading program we were forced to implement. I remember some of the Cree teachers discussing how they could no longer find time to tell stories with their students because of these curriculum controls. As for me, I suffered through the first year trying to figure out where I could fit in at the school. In the second year I was rewarded with a music teaching position, which allowed me complete curriculum control. In this position I started and ended every session with story, invited Elders into the class, and drew the majority of my musical examples from the students' lives: powwow drums, fiddles, and hip-hop all mashed up into one big story about what music is and how it can change our lives. I'm not saying that second year didn't have its ups and downs. There were still challenges from the students and from the administration but, when a lesson worked, the students left with a sense of wonder in their eyes and questions in their minds. My favourite memory from that time is from a lesson I gave on the hand drum. A student in the third grade came forward for her chance to play the drum and, after striking it a few times, a smile came to her mouth and she said, "It's like my heart is dancing."

When did our hearts stop dancing? I think the goal of Indigenizing the curriculum is to recapture a bit of that wonder. I think when we stop seeing the world in black and white and acknowledge that there are shades of truth and that multiple perspectives are valid, we start to bring that wonder back into our lives. The TRC is a document calling for action from the government; it is a powerful political force and, from the perspective of First Nations peoples, it is long overdue. But, it is also a living document. There

are many voices from the past and many voices from the future embedded within those black and white pages and, if we listen to the voices, we hear stories. Those stories paint a picture with every shade of colour—a complex image of the world. To honour our treaties, to honour Indigenous knowledges, to create space for Indigenous peoples within our Eurocentric institutions we need to allow the colours to bleed into our vision of the world, changing it from black and white to a spectrum depicting the range of experiences human beings are capable of knowing.

Conclusion

The only thing to which I have access is my experience: the stories I have created and the stories I have heard. Here I have shared three of my stories with you and, while I secretly hope that they have helped shape your understanding of reconciliation and welcoming Indigenous knowledge into Western academic institutions as things best learned through doing, I know that that hope is selfish. I cannot control your perception of my stories, nor would I want to. I can only ask that you honour their complexity and listen to them with open ears and open hearts. That is, after all, a good place to start in any attempt at reconciliation, whether it is between two young students fighting over a soccer ball, or two nations with violently interwoven histories trying to create a sustainable and peaceful future.

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We're in it Together: Learning Communities at the University of New Brunswick in Saint John

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Abstract

For the last four years, at UNB Saint John, faculty, staff, and senior students have cooperated to run a persistence project for first year students. The basic structure of the project is simple; in the fall term, we offer a six part series of one hour tutorials to help first-term, first-year students get the most out of their university experience. If students attend five of the six tutorials they qualify for a five point bonus in one course that is participating in the project. For each of the last three years more than a hundred students—approximately a fifth of our first-year cohort—attended the tutorials, learned a set of valuable skills, and qualified for the bonus marks. Developing this project has taught our campus much about the need to think locally and work cooperatively to develop a successful program. This descriptive report of the project examines why the early version of this project failed to attract students and the strategies we used to revise the program. We then review the current successful configuration of the project including how this project depends on faculty and staff involvement. A student leader in the program discusses the program in an anecdotal form.

Keywords: learning communities; tutorials; student persistence; peer-mentors

Background

UNB Saint John is a very small campus, but in terms of our first-year student cohort, we have a challenging population. Most students commute to class, a majority of students come from Southern New Brunswick, many work part-time, and many are the first of their families to attend university. Not surprisingly some first-year students find the transition into the post-secondary education system a challenge, and the attrition rate between first and second year is 28%; a number that is above the regional average. Over the last six years, faculty, staff, and administrators have attempted to enhance the experience of our first-year students and improve the campus's levels of persistence. In 2011, we developed a UNIV 1003 course; four sections of this First Year Experience course now helps up to 120 students transition into and succeed as university students. We developed an Early Alert System to identify and assist students who struggle in their first term. We also realized that we had a gap in our programs. We really did not have any organized way to help the whole of the first year student body get to know each other and to manage their new environment. The Learning Communities Project, known by the tag-line "We're in it together" and funded by a modest budget of \$12,000 (mostly devoted to hiring students to be Learning Community Leaders), was an attempt to close that gap. This article is

meant to provide small campuses who might want to implement similar programs with a summary of our efforts and a starting point for their own initiatives.

One of the guiding principles of the Learning Communities project is the conviction that any attempt to help our students needs to stay rooted in the real conditions of the campus and meet the immediate needs of the first year cohort. In larger universities in the United States, Learning Communities are traditionally constructed as groups of students, from a defined and similar body, who meet periodically to share a common academic experience. Conventionally this could mean that all the students on the same floor of a residence would take the same course, or that a group of students would all take two or three common courses linked by a similar theme. Here at UNB Saint John, the first attempt to develop Learning Communities followed these conventions. Each faculty offered “linked courses” and tried to encourage students to sign up for pairs or trios of courses in Arts, Business, and Science. Frankly this first version of the program was a failure. Students were not enthusiastic. Here in Saint John, when students finally got to a university campus, they preferred the freedom they had to organize and select their own courses, develop their own schedule, and hardly anyone signed up for the offerings that were grouped together. However, one part of our first pilot showed promise. Though the linked courses were supposed to be the core experience, we thought we would also develop a series of five or six one hour tutorials, run by paid peer-mentoring senior students, to help the first year students learn about the library, student services, finances, stress management etc. While not many first years were interested in the courses, the tutorials—which always had refreshments—sparked some interest.

Guided by the principle that programs would focus on the specific needs of our students, we asked the Learning Community Leaders, and a selection of the first year students, what parts of the first pilot had worked, what could be improved, and how we could get more students to participate. The students spoke up and they were clear. Their advice was to abandon the idea of linked courses, put more focus on the tutorials, encourage students to come to these after class activities, and, if possible, find some way to link participation in the Learning Communities with bonus marks in the student’s regular courses. The idea of giving marks for non-course activities made us wary, but the idea was carefully explored. The campus registrar assured us that in an academic year five such bonus points in a single course was statistically insignificant, and our students confirmed that it would really draw a crowd who thought five marks in a single course would be a big deal. Noting that there was a tension between the registrar’s assurance and the student’s perception, we proceeded with a new pilot, in the hopes that this tension would help fuel attendance.

With a new model in mind, the Learning Communities were reshaped. We figured out how to find good Student Community Leaders, we figured out how to interview, hire, and train them. We partnered with the library, Student Services, and Financial Services to develop relevant tutorials, and then we convinced the professors of most of the campus’s largest first year courses to offer a bonus of five marks for anyone in their courses who completed a minimum number of tutorial sessions. When we listened closely to our students and remained attentive to local context, we eventually revised the program until it started to meet the needs and interests of our students. Indeed, we know of no precedent for our particular program and the grass-roots nature of its creation may mean that it is unique.

Redesigning the Learning Communities Program

The Learning Communities program takes place in the Fall semester, with a session held every other week. Involvement in a Learning Community requires attending five tutorials led by a senior student and, while the students are motivated by the five bonus marks in one of the participating classes in which they are enrolled, the activities are designed so that students not only learn more about their

campus, but have a chance to connect with each other and with the senior student mentors. Learning Community Leaders, referred to as LCLs, are under the direct supervision and mentorship of the Persistence and Conversion Officer, and they report directly to her. LCLs are responsible for assisting and mentoring the students in their learning community and provide the groups with a youth mentor who knows the university system well. The LCL has a number of responsibilities, including: creating enthusiasm about the group and campus; initiating activities that encourage students to learn by becoming involved in campus life; orienting new students to the campus community, providing opportunities for them to become acquainted with other students, and finally serving as a peer-advisor to the students in the Learning Community.

When the Learning Communities program was redesigned in 2014, the links between courses were removed and attendance was opened up to allow participating students to join whichever session best fit into their schedule. Ideally, we would hope that the people would be attracted to the communities because they wanted to learn how to succeed as post-secondary students, but in truth the draw is the potential mark benefit the students anticipate. This component, of course, has to be carefully managed. The program offers bonus points for associated classes and by attending at least five out of six tutorials, a student could claim five bonus points for a first-year participating course in which they were enrolled. If students attend only four sessions they receive four bonus points. If they attend three sessions or less, they receive no bonus marks. The only stipulation for the bonus points is that a student cannot apply these points to a class which they were in danger of failing; the bonus points cannot be used to boost them into a passing grade, and thus professors do not have to worry that students who are in lock-step courses are advancing without the appropriate skills or knowledge. Bonus marks are available in 20 potential courses in the faculties of Arts, Business, and Science. A full list of the participating courses is made available to the students and placed online. The fact that professors in twenty courses are willing to participate in the program speaks volumes about the campus's commitment to persistence and retention efforts. If the faculty were not willing to go the extra measure to offer the bonus marks in their classes, the program would lack the essential incentive to which the students respond. All of these stipulations and regulations are embedded in a single contract/agreement which the students must sign when then join the program and if they hope to claim the bonus points.

Keeping track of the system is not necessarily a simple process. In order to better document the outcomes of the program and identify any weak spots, for the Fall 2014 program, leaders were expected to maintain an up-to-date and accurate attendance document in Excel. They were to also note any additional meetings, support given, or issues they had with their students. These attendance documents were necessary to ensure that students were assigned the correct number of bonus points for their participation. One thing we had not anticipated when unlinking the courses and opening up attendance was that some of the students switched which group they attended for each session. This initially caused some confusion for the leaders around who attended what, when, and where, as well as who the student was because they each were maintaining their own separate attendance lists. In order to remedy this, after the final tutorial each term, the Persistence and Conversion Officer collects all of the attendance documents and manually track each student's involvement.

From the outset the revamped Learning Communities drew significantly larger numbers. While the initial linked course model in 2013 attracted a declining number of students and saw participation in events dip from twenty nine to approximately ten, in 2014, had an initial enrolment of 150 students, with 104 of those actually completing the program by attending at least four out of the six sessions. However, the majority attended five and indicated they would have attended all six if it had not been for some of the confusion surrounding the start date. This is an increased overall participation of

approximately 75 students from the first year. Participation in the 2015 and 2016 semesters continues to be above 100 students.

In response to part of the feedback received from the leaders, instead of having one leader per session, LCLs are placed in pairs. Since we were anticipating larger participation with the removal of course links, we felt that having two leaders would allow them the time and ability to maintain personal connections with each of their students during sessions and after. Paired leadership also helps address issues related to security and mutual support and ensure that LCLs, both male and female, work in secure environment. After having a chance to speak with several of the students who attended the program, this proved to have been a good choice. Each said that having two leaders made it feel less like a lecture and more like a group study session. To better foster communication between students and leaders, the leaders set up a Facebook page for all participants in the Fall 2014 program to join. It was an effective way for the students to discuss topics covered in the sessions, ask questions, and continue to build connections with one another. The social media connections also allowed the leaders another avenue to advertise opportunities for students to get more involved in campus (i.e., upcoming events, Students' Representative Council elections, etc.). In addition, within a day or so of each session, the leaders were asked to send an e-mail to all the students in their group thanking them for attending, reminding them when their next session was and what it would cover, as well as checking in to see if anyone had any questions or concerns. Once we had finalized room bookings, the Persistence Conversion officer worked with the campus web developer, to create a Learning Communities page which can be accessed through the New Students section of UNB Saint John's website. At the moment, this page includes contact information, the schedule of tutorials for the semester, a description of how the program works, and how to join.

The tutorial sessions themselves are carefully planned to help the first-term, first-year students learn more about those aspects of the campus which will particularly helpful to them personally and academically. Each session includes a guest staff or faculty member to come and speak more in depth about the topic of the week. In some ways, the Learning Communities function like an in depth orientation, but care is taken to make sure the students encounter a session at a time when it will be most relevant to them. The six tutorial sessions cover a variety of topics and issues, as this selective overview demonstrates:

- **Getting to Know UNB Saint John:** The first week includes ice-breaker activities and is a chance for the LCLs and students to get to know one another and address any questions they have about the program, UNB Saint John, and university in general.
- **Your Student Services:** A member from the Student Services team is invited in to speak to the groups about the various things the department has to offer. Topics include everything from the study abroad program to the writing-centre to counseling services.
- **Learning About the Library:** The first half of this session is led by the LCLs. They walk the students through the online resources and services the library has to offer. Afterward, a member of the library team gives the students a physical tour of the library and they answer any questions the participants may have.
- **Mid-Term Stress Busters:** These sessions are presented around the midterm period and a faculty member and staff member from Student Services come in and, with the help of the LCLs, guide students through time management techniques and ways to best manage stress, including stress-reducing activities.

In 2014, an end of term survey was introduced. This was a great way to get insight into how participants felt about the program: whether it benefited them, if they would take the program again, any changes they would like to see, and so on. The majority of students indicated they would participate in the Learning Communities again if given the chance and that they would even like to continue on with the program in a part two if offered during the winter term and covering additional topics. Students indicated that the 5 bonus points were the main motivation to initially join a Learning Community; however, once they started participating, students found the topics to be worthwhile and educational.

Of the six sessions, the "Stress Busters" session, which was scheduled later in the term, was the most popular. Students indicated that the topic fell at an appropriate time in the semester, when they were beginning to find themselves overwhelmed by the workload. The presenters for that session were entertaining and gave invaluable advice on finding stress-management strategies that could be tailored to individual interests and needs. The "Your Student Services" sessions were a close second best. Students noted that it was beneficial to learn about the variety of support services available to them as well as the impact of the time management information they were given. At the other end of the spectrum, students found the "Learning About the Library" sessions to be least helpful. The LCLs suspected this may have been due to the fact that at the beginning of a first-year student's first semester of university they haven't yet realized how important the library will be. As a result, we've moved the library session closer to the end of the term, when students have realized that they might need to know more about what their library has to offer. Significantly, all except two participants who completed the survey lived off-campus during the semester. This could indicate that the program appeals to first-year students who are not in residence and perhaps have not had the chance to meet as many fellow students as their residence counterparts. Increased student connections was one of the initial goals of the Learning Communities program at UNB Saint John and it seems to be working.

As we begin to regularly roll out the Learning Communities Program, we are becoming aware of here the pressure points and crunch times tend to emerge. Certainly, one of the largest challenges to the program is scheduling the LCLs so that the tutorials fit their specific schedules. Each year, coordinating schedules among eight to ten upper-level LCLs as well as with guest presenters and then ensuring classroom availabilities and then confirming the sessions haven't been booked during the participating course times is difficult. As a result, the first week of classes often includes changes to the schedule, which has, in the past, caused momentary confusion among faculty and students.

With a core structure in place, the Learning Communities program has remained open to continued innovations and experiments, not all of which have succeeded. For example, we tried adding some additional interactive aspects to the program, but some of these have been met with reluctance from students. Students had been encouraged to take selfies at campus events, get ticket stubs initialed by organizers, or work signed by staff at the writing centre, etc. If they did this and showed any of their validated components to one of their leaders, they would have their name entered in a draw for a book store gift certificate. It is suspected that the low participation in this area of the program could be due to first-year students being shy or still not being fully comfortable in their first semester. The redevelopment of this aspect is currently underway. Other innovations may still be developed. For the second year in a row, students who participated have indicated that they would like to see increased interaction between themselves and faculty members, and this is an option that is currently being explored. But if some aspects of the program continue to be fine-tuned, we are convinced that there is much in the basic program that is meeting the student's needs at the ground level. Beyond the exit surveys which track student impressions and experiences, it is proving to be very difficult to determine through statistical studies the exact impact the program is having on student achievement or student persistence. The exit surveys certainly indicate that the tutorials are viewed as helpful and timely, but it

would be difficult to be sure that the specific workshop on stress management has helped students improve their performance during the final weeks of class. The workshop provides useful advice, but separating the impact of this specific tutorial apart from the other services offered by staff, the advice offered by professors to their own students, and programs periodically initiated by SRC, would make it difficult to determine exactly what the statistical impact of the Learning Communities has been. If the exit surveys and high approval ratings of the participants are accepted as evidence of success than the program is bearing fruit. This evidence of success is affirmed when we listen to Arfan Hajizadeh's comments about the Learning Community program.

From the Perspective of a Learning Community Leader

Arfan Hajizadeh is a third year student studying biopsychology at UNB Saint John. When he was in his first year he enrolled in the Learning Communities primarily to obtain the five bonus marks for a class of his choosing. As he progressed through the sessions he appreciated the value of the information he was receiving and after completing the tutorials, near the end of his second term, he applied to become a Learning Community Leader in his second year. If other campuses begin to implement their own version of Student Lead Learning Communities, they will soon learn that the success of the tutorials rely on the energy, skills, and connectedness of the student leaders. For this reason, this overview of the program will end with Arfan's perspectives which is best captured in his own words.

"From the beginning sessions of the Learning Communities tutorials, it was clear that the information would be helpful as I started to work as a first-year student. The tutorials focused on practical concerns, such as how to work the library online system, or how to relive stress actually aided me in the long run. Aside from receiving a few bonus marks for a difficult class such as biology I also gained information on different services on campus, which was beneficial. The same mindset I had in first year is the same as students have now; they join the program for the bonus marks, but along the way gain insightful information, which is what the Learning Communities is all about."

"In my second year I became a Learning Communities Leader, and I continued in that role this year in my third year. This is a paid position that students applied for two terms in advance before employment. Besides the record keeping responsibilities outlined above, leaders are encouraged to communicate with the students and provide advice and even relate our own experiences throughout university. And of course we are here to create enthusiasm about the program and to help ease the first year process as much as possible. I was initially interested in working as a LCL because, as I became more experienced with the variety of campus services UNB offers, I wanted to assist students who are new to our campus find their way to the same opportunities. I feel that first-year students listen closely to LCL's who are only a few years older than them, and they seek advice about classes, services etc. The information provided by the presenters of the tutorials is extremely helpful, but I feel that the position of a LCL is necessary to amplify that message and help students focus on the most important pieces of information."

"Aside from the bonus marks and useful information about services students receive there is also a social aspect to the Learning Communities. This program helps increase the social dimension as a lot of students end up meeting new people within their tutorial group, maybe even developing lasting relationships. It's an excellent way for first year students to kind of burst out of that bubble that they may be living in for their first semester of university. During sessions students are fairly attentive and are respectful

during. As a previous student of the program and now as a LCL I can confirm from witnessing the affect it has on the students. Just between this year and last I can see an increase in the participation numbers. This may be due to word of mouth, however it is evident that the reason for the popular demand is due to the increased support from professors. The program is being properly recognized by the faculty and staff, which is extremely important for the growth of the Learning Communities."

"The Learning Communities program is an excellent source of non-academic knowledge that a majority of students have no idea about. Services such as our useful online library system, financial services to discuss budgets and awarded bursaries, and stress busters are examples of rich content that will provide useful information for students. Even though students, like I was in first year, are there for the bonus marks does not mean that they do not take information away from it. The fact that the students are willing to attend and participate shows that they are striving to do well in school. Attending these hour-long sessions gives students a better insight into the university and what it truly has to offer."

Authors

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