

My teaching philosophy has evolved during the years, being influenced by my teaching and learning experiences on two continents and through interactions with hundreds of graduate students. One thing has never changed. I still believe the single key for successful instruction is the teachers' desire to empower their students to learn independently. This is what we do as faculty: support, enable, empower and guide each student's individual learning process.

Interactions with other educators in all levels of education have solidified my views about the essential instructional practices required for deeper learning. Simple information delivery is not teaching. The magic happens in interactions between people, because that is how we construct our own knowledge. When information is available around us day and night, the role of a teacher is more crucial than ever, guiding students to embrace their critical thinking skills. Helping students connect the content to their existing experiences and knowledge makes them more likely to engage in deeper learning that lasts for life.

A well-educated teacher in the diverse modern societies must have the dispositions and skills for supporting students from all backgrounds without ever erring into the side of othering in their instruction. Instruction has to be situated into the cultural context of the school and surrounding society. Mistakes of importing Finnish education have happened when the implementation has not accounted how inseparable students' learning and lives are.

Disposition statement

Being focused on supporting students' individual learning process and striving to differentiate for my students' individual needs, I strongly believe everyone can learn. Engaging in ongoing learning activities, I understand and value the importance of connected knowledge, and regularly check my own bias in order to avoid engaging in othering.

Learning

Learning is a twofold process of acquiring information and elaborating knowledge. This is an ongoing internal process, enhanced by external events. As a concept, learning covers the educational process at school, but also the way humans absorb information and cultural practices through their everyday interactions with the world.

For the past seven years my primary work has been focusing on online education, supporting adult learners to earn their masters' degrees in education. The basic principles of learning do not change with the medium of learning: acquisition and elaboration are still the most important parts. However, the way students engage in acquiring the information is different, which presents the requirement for faculty to put extra effort into interacting with students and building rapport. Some students appear to thrive in any given learning environment, online or offline, but most students need support from faculty. Regular interaction with faculty helps

students to elaborate the information so that they can apply it in real-life scenarios. Providing opportunities to practice the new skills to be learned solidifies the learning process to build permanent skill and knowledge structures.

Teaching

Excellent teaching is both art and science, done with one's personality with no excuses for failing to make every student feel welcomed and appreciated. Excellent online teaching has all the same expectations, but also requires increased effort on building presence and rapport, due to diminished opportunities for interaction. Pedagogical content knowledge and good quality instructional design are important key elements in all education.

Simply building an online course does not mean that learning would be happening. The course – where ever it is hosted – is just a place for students to find information and their learning materials – content reading materials, presentations, videos, tasks, rubrics, templates, etc., just like a classroom. Instruction is about supporting students' individual engagement by presenting meaningful information, listening to students' questions, and then either answering them or providing additional learning resources.

Engagement in one's own learning process is different from participation in classroom activities. The difference lies between autonomous and controlled activity. Intentional engagement reflects student's intrinsic motivation and goal orientation for determined involvement in one's own learning. Helping students to move from classroom participation to intentional engagement is the biggest challenge for anyone who wishes to teach.

Goals for Students

I strive to support students' mastery goal orientation, therefore avoiding anything that could be perceived as busywork. I help my students choose to develop their competencies by learning as much as they can. I expect my students to actively engage in building their own knowledge structures and finding applications for the topics their studies in their lives. Only connected learning is permanent.

The main goal for my students is to be open for new experiences and challenge their own thinking. It is impossible to learn if you already know. Learning happens in interactions and cooperation is the key for deeper learning, therefore I expect students to learn from each other, and support each other's learning process. The main goal is for students to engage in their own learning process.

Implementation

I strive to employ innovative strategies and approaches that support students' academic success, which is why mistakes are considered to be opportunities for learning. My goal is to meet every student as an individual and listen to their hopes and fears, acknowledging existing competencies and providing my professional expertise to support their learning.

Measurement and evaluation methodology is built to be non-punitive. Students will have clear task descriptions and rubrics for their assessments. Students are expected to engage in self-assessment and reflection. I will happily provide guidance and support. In exchange I expect students to take their own learning seriously and read for comprehension, write to communicate their thinking, and respectfully reciprocate with the faculty and other students.

Professional Growth

My personal learning is ubiquitous and unbounded. I just like to learn. Not necessarily for a certification, but to be well read and informed about my profession. As a connected educator I have created a good community of followers in social media, and have authored articles and blog posts about deep learning pedagogy and andragogy. I wish to grow as a scholar practitioner, and am looking to author an article to be published in a peer-reviewed journal. I am also looking to continue to research learner agency and ways to support online engagement. Building from my strengths and experiences, I am continuing to grow as an academic thought leader in learner-centered instructional practices.