Paper 13

Preparing Future Faculty for Multicultural Teaching and Learning as Everyday Philosophy and Practice

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Abstract
By necessity I began stretching my practical theories regarding multicultural teaching and learning (MCTL) and adult learning when I became director of Minnesota's Preparing Future Faculty Program (PFF) in 2003. Originally scheduled to begin teaching in the program in 2004, I was charged with expanding the program and guiding the experienced PFF teaching staff in redeveloping a Teaching in Higher Education course and a Practicum. Reviewing teaching evaluations and student confidence survey raw data from previous years I noticed that, in sharing ideas about what could be dropped from the course, a majority of student comments addressed the diversity-focused class session, suggesting the session be improved or dropped entirely; also, the gains scores were consistently small for the survey item tracing pre-/post course confidence to address/support diversity. The student-identified deficit had to be addressed – given the deep and broad diversity of participants, the wide range of academic institutions in which they would teach, and a state course objective to provoke understanding of student diversity. The course revitalization charge, therefore, required not only support for staff in creating a rich common syllabus that could be adapted by experienced and new members of the teaching staff, according to each teacher's practical theory but also (1) deeper understandings of our own theorizing, of MCTL and of adult learning in order to shape our common syllabi; and (2) development of individual research plans to investigate how and why changes had an impact as we personalized the common syllabi to specific teaching contexts. This article reports on how one teacher moved from the "teaching problem" of inadequately incorporation of MCTL in the Preparing Future Faculty course "Teaching in Higher Education" into the "teaching possibilities" that come with attending to practical theory, multicultural teaching and learning theory, adult learning theories, and student voices in a research-driven course redesign.
Practical theory can be described as the array of ideas serving as a personal construct guiding teachers as we learn and continue to teach, with ideas being developed through personal experience/attitudes, academic training/knowledge, and core values/commitments discussions, observation of others, and formative peer, student or supervisor feedback. A practical theory may serve to guide – tacitly or explicitly – the following aspects of a teacher's daily work: situational view of curriculum, level of goals set for students, expectations for student performance, understanding of teacher-student roles in the classroom, development of classroom climate, perceptions of students' social needs/cultural contexts, ideas about connections between life and learning, and pedagogical hopes (Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Stevenson, 2008).

A practical theory situated in multicultural teaching and learning (MCTL) in higher education requires teachers make explicit their understandings of *multicultural* and of *multicultural learning*. After collaborating with a faculty colleague to develop a grant project involving 35 multidisciplinary, multicultural university teachers in four cohort years meeting six times per year to discuss and develop projects specifically focused on MCTL, we closed our work with the project by composing a 300 word response to "What is multicultural learning?" for a Driven to Discover public image campaign. Embedded in our answer is a definition of *multicultural*, which is and involves "reach[ing] across boundaries of ability, age, class, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation and other personal, social and cultural identities so that learners will more thoroughly understand the multifaceted dimensions of knowledge" (Alexander & Chomsky, 2008). *Multicultural learning*, we learned from the collective projects, must be cultivated:

> Learners need practice and guidance to become active listeners, readers and writers striving to understand what others are saying *and* meaning. Sustaining Multicultural Learning involves creating classroom climates in which students and teachers can acknowledge and address the discomfort of working across boundaries, learn how to respond to difference, and grow intellectually and personally as a consequence. To make multicultural learning both possible and

effective, instructors must structure classroom interactions to be respectful and challenging, creative and meaningful, engaged and transformative. In such an environment, inaccuracies, mistakes, hasty generalizations and intolerance are addressed with honesty and care. (Alexander & Chomsky, 2008)

Teachers engaging MCTL, therefore, need to see anew the students in their classrooms and to understand anew the dimensions of lifelong adult learning. Stephen Brookfield offers helpful lenses in both of these areas. Speaking about the "college classrooms in my own twin cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul," where I also teach and which is typical of the places where Preparing Future Faculty students will build academic careers, Brookfield puts the classroom demographics together in this way:

> Among students sit next to Somalis, who sit next to Ukrainian students, who sit next to the children of Mexican migrant workers, who sit next to African American learners, who intermingle with Tribal and Indigenous people, who learn alongside working-class White Minnesotans – and all these students are the first in the families to go to college. Sometimes tribal and ethnic conflicts present in the homelands of learners re emerge in college classrooms. And, of course, class differences also become apparent among all students, including those of colour. (2006)

Given the richness of experience, breadth of learning preferences, deep well of beliefs, complex motivations and unbounded assumptions that these students carry into classrooms where they expect teachers to prepare them for future work in an ever-quickening, ever-complex, knowledge-based world. We – and they – need to develop keen understandings of adult learning. Brookfield (2000) sets out four distinct adult learning faculties:

- to think dialectically (move between objective/subjective, universal/specific in decision-making, recognizing the importance of contextuality over general rules/theory);

- to employ practical logic (attend to internal features of a given situation to reason contextually "in a deep and critical way" allowing for inferential reasoning);

- to know how we know what we know (becoming conscious of own/others' learning, ability to adjust styles situationally; as teachers, articulate "inferential chains of reasoning," cues seen/unseen/ignored/unknown, and know grounds for decision-making); and

- to engage in critical reflection. (assessing the match between earlier rules/practices/practical theories and emerging understandings in "interpersonal, work and political lives") (Brookfield, 2000).

Adult multicultural learning additionally requires "an understanding of group processes that allow students to regularly gain experience in planning group activities, in sharing responsibilities for carrying out plans, in evaluating accomplishments, in putting group welfare in the foreground, in abiding by majority decisions, and in cooperating with other members of the group" (Courts, 1958). Within an "enriched" reading group environment Courts' created students supplemented assigned reading with charts, library books, magazines, newspapers, and pictures related to current issues/contemporary life.

Courts (Ibid) found that enrichment activities focused on meaning making and promotion of higher thought processes increased students' "feeling of the need to read" and reading comprehension, especially with group work establishing a purpose and context in which to use learning. As Miss Courts' former student reading her masters thesis in 2002 I would recognize the roots of my own pedagogy – working *in* the group, not on it; making meaning from interaction among students, between teachers and students or linking classroom and world; and pursuing uneasy curious questions in a world rich with multiple resources and perspectives that needed sorting in the company of others.

Finally, adult multicultural teaching will need to engage students and teachers "in a continuing reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change" (Shrewsbury, 1987). Written while I was an undergraduate student and masters candidate working with Shrewsbury, I began my teaching career having experienced pedagogy

and pedagogues as embodying concepts of power – but with the understanding of *power* "as energy, capacity, and potential rather than as domination," as engaging student and teacher direction rather than directives (Shrewsbury, 1987). Engaging *power to* requires coming to understand the otherwise intangibles we carry with us when we use that power: assumptions and biases, experiences and alliances, presumptions and oppressions, blocking behaviours and budding possibilities.

"Teaching in Higher Education" Course Design: Incorporating Practical Theory, Multicultural Teaching and Adult Learning Frameworks

Phase 1: Where We Started, 2003-2004

Preparing Future Faculty began in 1993 as part of a national initiative to improve undergraduate education by bringing together a multidisciplinary mix of aspiring college and university faculty to comprehensively study, discuss and practice teaching, and examine the three-faceted faculty role common across colleges and universities in the United States: research, service and teaching. The graduate students and postdoctoral fellows enrolled in PFF courses come to the program enmeshed in the research focus of the doctoral-granting institution context and keen to deepen their skills for and understandings of classroom teaching, with the majority of students targeting careers at academic institutions where teaching expectations for faculty are equal to or prioritized over expectations for conducting discovery-based research. Staffed by the Center for Teaching and Learning and co-sponsored by the Graduate School, the two PFF courses are co-taught to create a synergy from the collaboration of a teaching-learning specialist and a disciplinary specialist, each holding a doctoral degree and balancing careers requiring – in differing proportions – achievement in teaching, research and service.

Students in "Teaching in Higher Education" study and practice, dialogue and write about teaching that promotes objectives rich, assignment-cantered, active learning for diverse student populations across a variety of academic, disciplinary, classroom (and beyond) settings. Course participants come from multiple disciplinary backgrounds, professional, national and ethnic cultures and each has elected to enrol in this course to pursue professional development as effective, responsive and reflective teachers. By the end of the program participants will have considered how teaching is informed by these different contexts and how participants can make choices as teachers that are effective for their students, adapted to their fields and appropriate to them personally. The co-teachers model a variety of deep learning strategies as we would use them in undergraduate courses (interactive lectures, peer instruction, writing/speaking to learn, discussion & group structuring, problem-posing, case study, role-playing and uses of technology), expecting students to come class prepared to create a respectful class climate, to share homework, to engage in dialogue that seeks consensus and dissent and to explore assumptions about teaching and learning, teachers and students by thinking in new ways about teaching and learning in their disciplines.

Representative of those eliciting student dissatisfaction, the Spring 2003 common syllabus included one MCTL-focused class session, "Diversity of Learners" during week six of the semester. Three learning outcomes are stated: "comprehend[ing] the richness that student diversity can bring to the classroom" via "analys[ing] and understand[ing] a range of learning styles that foster student learning" with attention to "gain[ing] an awareness of ways in which societal biases and individual biases can shape teaching." The combination of objectives, readings and class structure produced a class session focused on (1) understanding ways in which a teacher's preferred learning mode combined with disciplinary hierarchies establishing "best" ways to learn within a field created barriers to student learning and achievement and (2) gaining fluency with learning style theories in order to develop courses that incorporated multiple ways of engaging learners and demonstrating learning. No writing assignment due for this class session, with the curriculum vitae draft due the week before and the teaching philosophy due the week following this class session. Typically the session included a formative mid-course evaluation of co-teaching and of course content/practices.

Moving into the redesign endeavour with specific awareness on broadening MCTL elements that could be more fully incorporated into discussions, the Spring 2004 syllabus divided the "Diversity of Learners" class session into two parts: Learning Styles, week four, and Cultural Diversity, week nine. The combined class goals remained the same, but the "managing diversity" tone was replaced with a "possibilities

emanating from diversity" discussion framework. The Learning Style readings remained consistent with participants now completing a learning styles inventory and a brief writing assignment that aimed to provoke participants into practical theory building. The prompt offered three questions: What had participants discovered about themselves as learners? What links might exist between their learning preferences, teaching practices and expectations of students – especially those with learning preferences in contrast to their own? In what ways might they construct a syllabus to stretch themselves and their students in terms of learning preferences, assumptions and practices?

In focusing on Cultural Diversity," during week nine, a new selection of readings asked student to consider why MCTL theory was important for higher education, to understand engagement with diverse peers as significant to student development, and to learn strategies for incorporating divergent thinking and reflective analysis into interactive lecture and discussion. For tracking their practical theorizing, the readings were linked to two class assignments – design a class session on a topic in your discipline related to diversity, which would be adapted to an in-class micro-teaching session, and draw on the Diversity of Learners class session to revise a teaching philosophy statement due in class. A primary goal for Phase 1 of the redesign process was to start in a small way that would allow co-teachers to gain confidence with the new assignments and fluency with new readings as a common starting place for redesign each teacher would undertake.

Phase 2: Stretching to What Is Possible, 2005-2006

Between Spring 2005 and Spring 2006, I revised the my sections of the course in two ways: (1) deepening course readings by introducing a small number of just published articles and book chapters addressing universal course design, cross-cultural student development, structured academic discussion formats, and active learning strategies to assist students in becoming aware of how they had come to know and in considering how to guide students in coming to know; (2) introducing weekly writing prompts to overtly engage participants in dialectical thinking by casting prompts that would call students to test, link, evaluate and synthesize personal and social constructions of teaching and learning throughout the course with self, peers, teachers and future self as audience. The informal writing, additionally, made it possible for me to take in each student's response to readings and activities throughout the course; in this, I was able to be *in* the group discussions and to shape questions for future discussions. Overall, students welcomed the interplay between readings, informal writing and discussion.

By integrating these three elements starting with the first class period – and by having teachers share pieces of their own writing in response to readings - students overcame an initial worry that their writing would be evaluated by all in the classroom for political correctness rather than for striving to engage the other PC elements necessary for building an understanding teaching and learning: practical connections, potential coalitions, purposeful communities and perceptive collaborations. (The reading selections and writing assignments for this phase are reported in Alexander, 2007). As reflected in Table 1, the confidence survey data gathered from students during Phase 1, show an alignment of strongest gains score (1.0 or better) and smallest standard deviation (.09 – 1.07, each on the 7-point scale used for this survey) in GRAD 8101 class for Spring 2005a and Spring 2006, each section featuring co-teaching *and* student co-led presentations into the "Cultural Diversity" class session.

Four voices became more powerful than one for a single reason according to participants: hearing multiple voices unravel multicultural teaching and learning practices allowed participants to more carefully and fully consider their own experiences by the multiple examples of shifting perspectives, sifting assumptions from facts and differentiating between personal discomfort and intellectual disagreement – all aspects of adult learning and a benefit of intentionally diverse teaching teams in a multiracial classroom (Fried 1993; Brookfield 2000; Brookfield 2006).

Table 1.`– "Address/Support Student Diversity" Confidence Survey Item Scores

	N	Mean (pre/post)	Standard Deviation (pre / post)	Gains Score	Co-Teaching

Spring 2005a	21	4.0 / 5.63	1.58 / 0.90	1.63	Yes: by teachers & students
Spring 2005b	12	4.67 / 5.5	0.72 / 1.00	0.83	No: only one teacher present that session
Spring 2006	24	4.0 / 6.0	1.01 / 0.73	2.00	Yes: by teachers & students
Summer 2006	13	5.3 / 5.9	1.48 / 0.95	0.60	No: only one teacher present that session
Spring 2008	20	4 / 5	1.54 / 1.07	1.0	Yes: by teachers & students; work with "ill defined" scenarios
Summer 2008	12	4.4 / 5.4	1.68 / 1.43	1.0	Yes: by teachers; work with "ill defined" scenarios

Phase 3: Extending the Stretch, 2008-2009

In designing the Spring and Summer 2008 sections, I asked my co-teachers – long-time colleagues, both middle class, married, white men new to MCTL – if I might make two additional changes to the course: first, fully integrate MCTL across the course; second, introduce an open discussion of conflict strategies at the end of the course by asking students how they would resolve two difficult scenarios. With those agreements in place, the course came to include the following components each week:

- practical experience (perspective shifting reflection, analysis of class-generated scenarios, microteaching with feedback, co-leading a 50 minute class segment, transfer and apply to specific disciplines/courses)

- diverse readings (research by/about students, teachers, co-curricular staff, administrators; classroom analysis; analysis of cultural and identity contexts at personal, disciplinary and institutional levels; international scholarship of teaching/learning)

- discussion-based learning (active listening; multiple formats/grouping strategies; meta-theoretical feedback sessions to examine placement/structure of discussions)

- forward looking feedback (debrief co-teaching activities; peer observation; meta-theory discussions between activities – how does this apply to my situation; comments on papers in response to carefully-composed student-generated questions)

- writing across the curriculum (weekly ARAs synthesizing readings; transfer and apply across disciplines; portfolio-based grading with closing self-assessment rubric).

The infusion also more easily accommodated a rich mixing of learning modalities: blend visual/oral, listening/talking, self reflection/group processing, student practice/teacher demonstration, abstract conceptualization/practical illustrations (Brookfield, 2006). Following a Highlander Folk School learning circle discussion model the overall structure engaged students in thinking how they might "build a program [teaching practice] that will deal with things as they are now and as they ought to be at the same time," a two-eyed approach to education (Horton, 1990). Through process I began to conceive of the readings-informal writing-small group discussions-peer feedback component as an instructional entity, a third member of the formal teaching team contributing to the classroom community and conversations. In this, we increased the potential that "at some point in the class most students will be taught by someone whose learning style, personality, cultural background and communicative preferences match their own" (Brookfield, 2006)

Table 2. – A Learning Circle Approach to GRAD 8101

	What?	So What?	Now What?	Tasks

	Knowledge	Analysis	Synthesis	Action Steps
About Learning	understand learning theories; cognitive & identity development; students as inter-subjective subjects	analysis of learning: in your field, experience, related disciplines, family, cultural & affinity groups	scaffold learning for class session: situational context, objectives, measures of learning & of teaching	complete reflective writing, learning styles inventory, plan a 50-minute session of 8101 to co-teach
About Teaching	investigate integrated course design principles based on active, multicultural, assignment-centred, writing/speaking to learn strategies	examine personal, local, disciplinary learning assumptions to understand implications for own teaching, theorizing, & decision-making	discuss teaching cases/scenarios; observe teaching & examine syllabi built from active, integrated, multicultural course design principles	draft teaching philosophy, write course proposal with objectives & calendar setting out assignment-centred course organization
About Class-rooms	increase awareness & ways of engaging specific situational context to develop interactions to enhance classroom climate & students multiple strengths	plan/co-teach 50-minute session to enact 8101 topic; use teaching & assessment strategies new to class & appropriate to own context	post-teaching meta-analysis of co-taught segments: based on goals, experience, theory address what worked could work better	develop a major course assignment with assessment plan (from objectives to homework to evaluation tools) to accompany syllabus
As Students	prepare through targeted readings and ARA for lecture linking active learning, education practices of US civil rights movements to multicultural teaching as an every day practice across disciplines	respond to readings on universal design concepts, understanding student life contexts, identity development theories to generate ARA on MCTL in own teaching practice	extend from readings, ARA, lecture, discussion of cases, student co-teaching & questions at the end of MCTL-specific class to address what you could do tomorrow	compose, share, problem-solve in cross-disciplinary groups scenarios (from US, international & students' classrooms); incorporate new understandings in revised teaching philosophy
As Peers	engage with peers in a writing intensive, discussion-based, MCTL course with forward looking objectives & assessments	practice observation & feedback processes (initiating, offering, responding to & assessing possible next steps) with peers & teachers	establish practice of gathering peer feedback through exchange of assignment drafts, observation of teaching & analysis of responses	employ self- & peer assessment practices (peer revision memos, writing group discussions, portfolio review with self assessment rubric

The session focusing on "Teaching for Learning" – class two – provides an example of changes in early weeks of the semester. This session included a presentation in which I analyzed practices teachers can use to bridge emotion and intellect to help students from the first day of class learn to shift perspectives across cultural contexts whether in making sense of content materials or cross-cultural interactions. By asking students to make use of their informal writing, which focused on readings addressing the shift from lecture-based/teaching-centred educational approaches to interaction-based/learning-centred paradigms, pairs – then disciplinary groups –talked about their own processes of emotional-cognitive bridging provoked by the course so far.

During the "Class Session Design" and "Learning Styles" weeks that followed new readings on student identity development and on student of colour perceptions of faculty behaviour invited the class to see their own disparate personal identity development to understand factors in perceptions of student learning, to assess teaching strategies that situate developmental phases, and to gain additional frameworks for considering tensions that emerge within student-student communication and teaching-learning/teacher-learner interactions when people are at different places along development continuums.

The middle section – now with six session leading up to the carry-over "Cultural Diversity" week – emphasized course design and syllabus development as dependent on understanding the deep structures of student learning, whatever one's discipline or course-level assignment. group of students. To end the "Cultural Diversity" class session – and to employ, stretch, re-make practical logic and reflection – students role-played scenarios featuring "diversity flashpoints"– those interpersonal moments in a faculty–student, student-student, or faculty-faculty interaction that "originates from an area of identity difference (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability/disability, language or linguistic ability, religion, age, size, family structure, geographic origin)" (Garcia, Hoelscher & Farmer, 2005:).

One scenario linked to a social science classroom featured a student-student interaction that inflamed class and race tensions while also silencing the teacher. Following the discussion of each scenario from character roles/perspectives and in the context of shifting each scenario to another discipline, students completed the "post-course" confidence survey, this time including two open-ended questions asking students to describe "two ways in which you've developed confidence as a future faculty member" and "two areas where you've seen your confidence with regard to teaching and learning plateau." The moderate gains scores and broader spread of Likert responses reflected in Table 1 for Spring and Summer 2008 indicate that the flashpoint scenarios had tempered their "addressing/supporting student diversity" confidence. Yet, as one student noted in a comment reflecting the responses overall, "I am sure I will encounter issues that I [am] not prepared for"
but for which she indicated she had skills from which to begin the "in the minute" thinking necessary to develop an appropriate response.

Phase 4: Student Voices, 2009-2011

GRAD 8101 students initially and openly bring biases, hierarchies, tenderness and yearning – tangible and intangible – into the classroom (O'Brien, 1990). They not so secretly begin semesters wishing I would just let them keep company with one of the "teaching tips" books as they develop a syllabus and assignments for a class they will teach someday, and let them assemble in disciplinary-expert discussion groups throughout the process because what happens in science certainly cannot be transferred to humanities, and vice versa. Yet, they have enrolled in a course known for – whatever the section and co-teachers – drawing on the tenderness and yearning of new teachers to unravel the biases and hierarchies.

In designing a MCTL infused GRAD 8101, I invite the course-opening resistance by making it ordinary for students to "speak out loud their emerging understandings, or raise questions that represent where they are in their struggles as learners," believing that the more they speak the biases and tenderness, "the more they are engaged"(Brookfield, 2006).
In this, I sought to make "pushing back" a regular part of classroom interactions, asking students questions and asking students to question one another in order to dig beneath the resistance for its complex motivations: Really, do *all* chemistry teachers in the US use the same approach as the teachers in your department? Does everyone learn chemistry in that way? How would your lab mates describe themselves as learners? How would it affect your research team if everyone processed information in the same ways? If this one way works, why do so many students drop out or fail introductory chemistry classes? Would your dad learn chemistry in the same way you have? No, well then, your dad is a smart guy, so how would you make it possible for him to learn chemistry as a student in your class? What about a writing assignment that made him explain an element in haiku, or that asked him to explain just why the ingredients for that family favourite high rising layer cake need to be added in exactly the order and proportion set out in the recipe, or that asked him to explain which of the three formulas you just discussed would help a chemist make a particular recommendation to a client or policy maker?

I want students to understand – at every phase of course design and in every discussion about classroom interactions – how biases and hierarchies work *and* how tenderness and yearning compel us to push back to unravel what isn't working for enough students – all in order to create something that will work for more learning for more students. Again, the two-eyed approach to teaching and learning, with a slight twist: What is in front of me right now? What questions do I need to ask in order to understand what I could make possible in the future?

With the need for course redesign established (Phase 1), then framed across sections (Phase 2) and finally tailored to particular co-teachers (Phase 3), it is time to focus on what students have said in their ARA writings from Spring 2005 through Spring 2008 and on what GRAD 8101 alums have carried with them into academic careers.

Do they understand MCTL as an everyday philosophy and practice, one that they carry on to some degree? Do they make meaning as teachers through practical theorizing, weighing personal experience, local attitudes, core beliefs, classroom observation, situational diversity context, and information from feedback loops they establish? To close this long-term research project during Spring 2010, I will: (1) Reflect on the course redesign through a critical analysis of students' ARA writings for the Cultural Diversity class sessions to identify patterns in their descriptions of everyday MCTL they'd plan for a class they expect to teach and to trace the kinds of questions students ask in an addendum written at the end of that class session. (2) Look beyond the course by surveying the 102 alums of my sections of GRAD 8101 to determine whether the have maintained, gained, plateaued, questioned "new identities, assumptions, explanations, roles, values, beliefs and behaviours" related to MCTL as an everyday philosophy and practice, and to understand whether the redesign of GRAD 8101 provided these future faculty with tools for on-going theorizing and reflective practice that allow them to make sense of "disorienting dilemmas" (Brookfield, 2000) that accompany teaching and learning in the diverse settings that characterize 21st century classrooms in the US.

The three-part on-line survey will include a reprise of the course confidence survey, three short response questions about current teaching practices, and a request for select demographic data. (3) Invite alums who now hold academic appointments to opt into a short semi-structured interview during Summer 2010 to discuss one course they currently teach, focusing on decision-making processes related to syllabus construction, structure of class sessions, patterns for/of classroom interactions and student assessment, and on feedback from students along with their own personal reflection on the course in its specific instructional context.

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