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| FACILITATION REPORT |

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| Article: | Donald Schön's presentation on “Educating the Reflective Practitioner" to the 1987 meeting of the American Educational Research Association, in Washington, D.C. |
| Facilitator: | Dan Labecki |
| Group: | Christian, Joanne, Heidi |
| Date: | Tuesday, May 15, 2012 |

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| **Introduction and Goals Raised** |
| I started the session by having each member of the group navigate to the following URL: ‘<http://danlabecki.com/EDUC5004G/seminar1/#agenda>’. This website includes the agenda for the seminar, the group member bios, Donald Schon’s bio, speech summaries, and the questions that I hoped to ask during the session.  The agenda on the website illustrated my intention to break the session up into the following three topics: “school knowledge”, “reflection-in-action”, and “reflective practicum”. Each topic would start with a summary, and end with a question and discussion period.  The stated goal of the seminar was to review, and elicit discussions around, each of our experiences with “school knowledge”, “reflection-in-action”, and “reflective practicum” in the design and delivery of modern day education models. |

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| **“School Knowledge”** |
| **Summary:**  For this section, I summarized Donald Schon’s dialogue on “school knowledge”. I then reviewed the first half of “The Teacher Project”. I went over the setup, the goal, and the series of events that led Boy #2 to become “divergent from the intended pattern” that he was supposed to create. I stopped at the point where the teachers used “junk categories” to label him as a “slow learner”, and as a student who couldn’t follow directions and lacked basic skills.  **Question(s):**  I asked the group, “What labels/categories do you, or your school board, use when dealing with students who are struggling academically?”  **Discussion:**  **Joanne** brought up report cards and spoke of the “individual education plans” that can be attached to them. She described an IEP as a formal document that is used to identify students with learning disabilities/exceptionalities. In addition to the IEP, Joanne felt there was a lot of support throughout the board for students who are in need of assistance. It is common for students to be exempted from courses, or to have special accommodations made for them in the classroom.  Issues:   * Effectively identifying learning disabilities and exceptionalities. * Getting the right support to better ensure academic success.     Solutions:   * Individual Education Plans * Willingness to continue to look for ways to improve upon the models currently in place. Staying at the forefront of changes. * Promoting a push towards INCLUSION… for support within the classroom.   Perspectives Covered:   * Teachers * Students   **Christian** offered an interesting counterpoint by detailing the ‘less than ideal’ teaching situation in the United Arab Emirates. Christian noted that education models were not as developed as they are in Canada. “There is still a big stigma attached to people with exceptionalities”, he noted. He said the bigger problem, though, is that students with learning difficulties are not offered any support. In fact, there is no system in place for teachers to identify and seek out assistance for students in need. He felt that the use of ‘junk categories’ was still prevalent in the classroom.  Issues:   * Learning disabilities/exceptionalities exist, but are not addressed. * No system in place to support those in need * There is a special education teacher, but he is not of much use. * Stigma attached to those with perceived or noted disabilities/exceptionalities. * Christian mentioned there is a Government led movement in place to align more closely with Western models, but it is slow. * He feels the his western counter parts are doing there part, but it is hard to change the ways of the old ex-pat educators were still hold onto traditional methods and show resistance to the new. He feels as they retire, change will more quickly.   Solutions:   * No easy answers. Change is slow, but the current practices of the west are on the radar, and Christian has seen progress in the three years he has been there. * The more educators who take programs like our MEd, the easy it will be to bring about change.     Perspectives Covered:   * Teachers * Students * Government/Society/Culture   **Heidi** agreed with Joanne that, even in Canada, there is always room for improvement. She highlighted the importance of continuing to look for ways to improve on existing models of education. She noted her experience in working on projects that help provide support to students looking to get a post-secondary education, but having to do so through a non-traditional means.  Heidi told us that her daughter has a condition where she experiences very brief seizures. She mentioned that it was very easy for her to discuss her daughter’s issues with high school staff. However, she was still surprised by the advice she received from some of her friends/associates, telling her that it was better not to label her daughter, or to bring attention to her condition. They felt it was better to hide it because of the stigma that was so prevalent in Christian’s part of the world.  Heidi strongly opposed this stance, and felt her daughter needed to accept her situation, and not hide from it. “Everyone has problems, and the best support is available to those that do not hide shamefully from there problems”, she said.  Joanna chimed in to say that she felt Heidi’s daughter was a great SELF-ADVOCATE for herself, and that self-advocacy is something that she pushes for in her special education courses.  Issues Identified:   * + Tolerance/acceptance Still stigma, even in Canada, around identifying individuals with disabilities and exceptionalities. Not only from students but also from educators and/or professional associates.   Potential Solutions Discussed:   * + Promoting self-advocacy, tolerance and acceptance.   + Realizing strength in numbers and the quality of support that can come from others who are aware and accepting of their situations.   Perspectives Covered:   * + Teachers   + Students   + Parents |

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| **“REFLECTION-IN-ACTION”** |
| **Summary:**  After summarizing Schon’s concept of “Reflection-In-Action”, I continued on with “The Teacher Project” example that I had raised in the initial discussion. My focus was on the teacher who, throughout reflection-on-reflection-on-action, was able to spot the real cause of Boy #2’s divergence from the pattern he was expected to recreate.  I asked the group to navigate to a document that detailed Durham College’s updated “Faculty Skills & Abilities Competency Matrix”.  Link: <http://danlabecki.com/EDUC5004G/seminar1/dc_skills_abilities.pdf>  **Question(s):**  Is reflection-in-action, and/or reflection-on-reflection-in-action, common at your school board/educational institution?  Do you know of any updated hiring and/or a professional development criterion that evaluates an individuals experience with ‘reflection’?  How do you use reflection in your professional life, and do you find it easy/natural to do, or is it a struggle? What about your colleagues?  **Discussion:**  **Christian** again expressed that the situation is quite different in the United Arab Emirates. Currently there is still a heavy focus on rote learning, and the ‘sage on the stage’ model, but a “major shift is occurring”. School boards are pushing for student centered learning, and to create environments that incorporate constructivist and problem solving approaches to learning. There is a lot of talk about ‘engaging students’. Still, long-standing teachers are resisting and continue to teach the way they were taught.  On the topic of reflection, communication is a big obstacle. Translators are not always available, and often their quality leaves a lot to be desired. “This is a troublesome issue because it makes the task of educating the already weary and resistant staff on the merits of reflection that much more difficult”, Christian said.    I asked Christian about equal rights for woman in education, and whether their opinions were valued as part of this ‘major shift’ that he said was occurring.  Christian said the school system is still very segregated. He teachers only boys and there are only two female staff members at his school, but they are not teachers themselves. He feels the movement for equal rights is moving slower than the progress being made in adopting western school models of teaching/learning.  Issues Identified:   * + Gender equality   + Language barrier   + No specific PD in place to encourage and facilitate adoption of reflective practices.   + “Sage on the stage” approach to learning still the norm.   + Rote learning   Potential Solutions Discussed:   * + Again, not easy answers when dealing with developing nations. Solutions range from more access to translators, development and implementation of effective/modern PD   Perspectives Covered:   * + Government   + Teachers   + Women   **Joanne** was unsure of any updated hiring practices at her board. She did provide a detailed look into the professional development model available to teachers at her board, and it provided a strong counterpoint to what Christian was experiencing in the Unit Arab Emirates. She spoke of professional growth goals, development strategies, providing rationale for doing particular types of professional development, and the approval of action plans and timelines.  She said the entire process was highly reflective in nature. She also mentioned that new teachers get placed into induction programs, where they get grouped with mentors. These mentors become a type of ‘critical friend’, since they assist new teachers with learning processes, professional development and personal growth. They listen to stories of success and failure, and then they offer their constructive feedback. They also watch you in action, so they perform reflection-on-reflection-in-action.  These mentors, then, are ‘critical friends’ who regularly perform ‘peer reflections’, and also reflect on new teachers reflections-in-action.  Christian commented how it would be great if they had mentors in the Unit Arab Emirates, but noted that most of the “old guard” educators would only be capable of pushing their ‘out of fashion’ teaching practices.  Addressing the question of personal reflective practices, Joanne mentioned that she does do a lot of reflection in her current role at school. She said that her reflections are well structured and documented, and that she refers back to them when reflecting on her personal progress and growth. She also reflects on the type of teaching that is occurring in her classroom, and does a lot of reflection and sharing of ideas with her colleagues.  Issues Identified:   * + N/A   Potential Solutions Discussed:   * + N/A   Perspectives Covered:   * + Teachers   + Teacher Mentors   **Heidi** said she has always been a very reflective person by nature. This past year, largely in part to the MEd program, she has taken reflection ‘to a different level’. Due to the seven courses she has taken in MEd, her entire approach to learning and teaching is changing/evolving. She admits to being in a state of cognitive dissonance this past year. She used to be a practitioner of traditional teaching models/methods, and it was very disturbing and uncomfortable for her to have her views on teaching philosophy change so quickly.  She is now actively trying to use more of a constructivist approach in her classroom, as well as problem-based learning.  I asked her if she felt it would be difficult to influence her colleagues to take a similar approach. She, rather surprisingly, thought that it wouldn’t be difficult because ”the college is already moving in that direction”. Heidi believes that a lot of what she is learning in the MEd program is aligning with the needs and goals of the college, and that there is a lot of energy and excitement on campus because of this movement towards reflective practices.  She also noted that students are changing, and we need to continue to reflect on their changes and continue to adjust our teaching practices to their needs.  Issues and potential solutions:   * + Changing student needs   + Cognitive dissonance   Potential Solutions:   * + Need to continuously adopt to changing student needs   + Dealing with cognitive dissonance by finding like-minded colleagues with which to discuss new ideas, approaches and philosophies.   Perspectives Covered:   * + Teacher   + Student   + Colleagues   + Educational institutions |

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| **“Reflective Practicum”** |
| **Summary:**  After reviewing Schon’s concept of “Reflective Practicum’, I focused the discussion on the increasing popularity of ‘learning labs’ in post-secondary education.  I showcased articles on:   * + UOIT’s ACE building   + Durham College’s learning labs for housing, hospitality and tourism, and culinary programs, to name a few.   **Question(s):**  It seems that educational institutions are moving away from the belief that “practice is a second-class activity”. Do you know of any programs that you feel do a great job of mixing in the ‘practical’ with the ‘theory’?  END OF SESSION: As I was reading the question, our group was pulled back into the main room, and the seminar came to a close. |