

Statement of Teaching Philosophy — Dr N. Fuyane

Introduction

To describe my teaching practice, I must first outline my onto-epistemological views, since they determine my academic identity and how I approach fundamental questions: What is education? What is knowledge, and what is the nature of learning? Who do I teach? What must I teach? These questions ultimately lead to the most crucial one: What constitutes good teaching? While these questions may seem straightforward to some, they demand critical reflection from a pedagogical perspective.

My View of Good Teaching

To define "good teaching," I draw upon several influential frameworks: Pratt's (1992, 1998) teaching perspectives, Schön's (1983) concepts of *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*, and Larrivee's (2000) framework for critical reflectivity in teaching. These frameworks guide the continuous refinement of my teaching and learning approach. I understand my role as advanced in Gee's (1990) theoretical framing of teachers as members of an affinity group whose role is to induct students as apprentices into the semiotic domain (academe and specific discipline).

Guiding Principles

My teaching practice is grounded in a libertarian worldview and social justice discourse (Friere, 1970; Fraser, 1998, 2009; Leibowitz and Bozalek, 2016). I embrace a dialogical approach to education, and my pedagogy is largely driven by a constructivist epistemological view, though I adopt a pragmatic approach to educational challenges. This stance allows me to tailor my teaching to the local and specific contextual realities of any group (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). I encourage students to bring their socially constructed meanings into the learning process. Having taught in institutions from two different higher educations in Africa, and in a UK public historical institution with many international students, I recognise the varied realities and social capital of my students and strive to provide socially just, equity-oriented teaching and learning activities (TLAs).

Constructive Alignment and Deep Learning

When developing TLAs and assessments, I prioritise constructive alignment (Biggs, 1999), which emphasises the power of symbolic interactionism for meaning construction through learning activities and the role of the teacher in providing or facilitating a learning environment that supports learning activities that entrap students to the intended learning outcomes (Biggs, 2012). So at the centre of the constructive alignment concept is the interconnection among the intended learning outcomes, the TLAs and assessment tasks. Constructively aligned activities actively engage students, promoting deep learning over surface learning. This engagement is fostered through a cooperative process involving active interaction between students-to-students, students-to-teachers, students-to-content, teachers-to-teachers, teachers-to-content, and content-to-content (Anderson, 2003; Anderson and Garrison, 1998).

Connectivism and Technology Integration

In addition to constructivism, I incorporate the connectivist paradigm (Siemens, 2005), which acknowledges the complex, networked nature of learning in the digital age. I use frameworks such as the Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) model (Mishra and Koehler, 2006) and Puente's (2006) SAMR model to effectively integrate technology into my TLAs and assessments. These models provide essential guidance for 21st-century teaching and learning skills.

Curriculum Development and Evaluation

While teaching is at the coal face of academia, a lot is done at the back office; for example, curriculum development. Materials development is a constant feature in one's academic career but often most do not get the opportunity to develop programmes. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to develop two programmes while at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) - the Advanced Diploma in Marketing and the Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing. Like teaching, curriculum development is philosophical and often needs consideration of social justice.

While student evaluation of teaching (SET) is crucial for quality assurance and enhancement, it must be combined with other evaluative measures, such as peer reviews, self-evaluation (reflective practice and portfolio of evidence), reflective journals, and qualitative studies to effectively identify gaps and propose informed enhancement. I have always had some positive

reviews from students, commendable outcomes such as consistently high pass rates, requests for collaboration, and winning teaching excellence awards.

Assessment

Assessment plays a critical role in education, serving various purposes. Its well-known and traditional purpose is that of “assessment of learning”, which is summative, evaluating student achievement at the end of a unit, module or course. Examples include final exams, term papers, or end-of-semester standardised tests. I bet all of us with more than 10 years of teaching experience have run such assessments. The second type or purpose is “assessment for learning”, also known as formative assessment, which provides feedback to both teachers and students to inform instruction and the next stage of learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Earl, 2013). Examples include classroom quizzes, exit tickets, and teacher observations, which help adjust teaching strategies and support student learning throughout the process.

The third type is “assessment as learning”, which emphasises self-assessment and reflection, where students monitor and evaluate their own learning progress (Earl, 2013). This form of assessment is somehow difficult to implement as it depends largely on students’ motivation to learn; hence high engagement with their studies. Examples include student portfolios, self-reflection journals, and peer reviews, empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey. Each type of assessment serves a unique purpose, contributing to a holistic view of student progress and effective instruction. As the education sector is grappling with the profound effects of artificial intelligence on assessments, understanding the principles of these approaches is central to keeping academic integrity intact.

Conclusion

As a parting shot, I believe a dancer is as best as their last dance; hence the need for continuous improvement. I believe reflectivity and reflexivity help me to escape being “trapped in unexamined judgments, interpretations, assumptions, and expectations” (Larrivee, 2000:293). My motto is *“If you can’t change, you will be left running fast in the past.”*

Nkululeko Fuyane: HHEA; Dcom-UNISA, RSA; MBA-NUST, Zim; PGDHE-Rhodes University; BCom Marketing-ZOU, Zim; Dip. In PR-LCCI-EB (UK).