Recap of Lesson Study Six

On March 25, 2022, Talladega College hosted the Lesson Study “Rising Up: Active Learning”. Drs. Shapley and Shope engaged the students in a lesson on Sociology and Ethics. The central focus of the lesson was: “How will the new social organization embrace technological developments in the classroom using the ethical considerations of sociology?” This lesson was markedly different from the previous lessons that had been taught. Although the facilitators focused on ethics as in previous lessons, they deviated quite a bit from the written lesson plan. This was in large part because the lesson being taught was based upon the research that the two gentlemen had engaged in together. They began with Dr. Shope focusing on several terms pertinent to understanding the context of the lesson. Immediately after a review of these key terms, he discussed several key concepts relevant to sociology and ethics: Do No Harm, Voluntary Participation, Informed Consent, Confidentiality, and Anonymity. He inquired rather students had any questions surrounding the meaning of any of these terms. Most of the students indicated that they were familiar with the terms; however, there were a few questions that were promptly addressed and clarifying answers were provided.

Next, a video was displayed” What is Sociology: Crash Course Sociology #1 video out of Montana Mizzou. We watched 6 minutes from the video. The speaker in the video spoke very rapidly. Immediately after watching this video, the facilitators iterated that “Sociology is about seeing the specific in the general and the strange in the familiar.” This was a quote by Peter Ger. They talked to the students and allowed them to expound about what they believed this meant.

Dr. Shapley began to speak about the research that he and Dr. Shope conducted involving social media areas of discomfort. He enumerated five areas where discomfort often is experienced:

1. Social media has many resources, but they often do not go into enough detail about particular concepts.
2. Social media opens students up to the possibility of being abused by other users, other students, or by content on the platform.
3. While almost every student has social media, certain types of social media are popular with certain types of students.
4. Social media is not monitored enough for inappropriate usage.
5. Students from lower income backgrounds may not have as much access to the computer or internet as students from higher-income backgrounds.

As he discussed this, he allowed students to comment and discuss areas where they have had discomfort or they know students who may have experienced discomfort in these areas. He continued to say that everyone of us has biases and we are more likely to fall for what we believe that what we don't.

At this point, Drs. Shapley and Shope separated the students into four groups. In each of these groups that were to devise a plan for a new social organization to embrace future technological developments in the classroom without ethical considerations. They were allowed 15 minutes to devise the plan.

This is when the magic occurred in the lesson. Previously, I was baffled at the degree that this lesson deviated from conventional lessons and everything that had been done in the other lesson studies. I wondered if the facilitators were purposely doing something off-tilt to cause alarm and

if I had been dropped off on an episode of Ashtin Kusher's "Punked". However, as I began to walk around and listen carefully while the groups interacted with each other, my entire perspective changed.

The students were having robust discussions surrounding their plans. They were engaged in deep higher-level thinking exercises where they were creating a plan that allowed the students to focus on the central focus. They were in essence utilizing an exploratory learning model. The ELM extends from Kolb's experiential learning model to adapt the use of application, and provides examples from research and development projects to exemplify how the model works in practice. Teaching in these contexts provides less emphasis upon curriculum and more emphasis upon sequencing learning experiences, metal reflection, peer assessment, and group work.

This is exactly what we were observing. While providing enough context to introduce the lesson and pique the students' curiosity, Drs. Shapley and Shope did very little to frontload the lesson. They went against Bernice McCarthy's 4-MAT teaching model that so many educators use: Engage, oscillate between Teaching and Learning Activities, and then provide a Culminating Activity. Instead, they taught briefly and jumped directly into a student led activity where students were challenged to think outside of the box.

Clearly, steps in Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning were skipped. The presenters jumped straight to students analyzing, evaluating, and constructing. This challenges the conventional thinking about education. Normally, we do not look at skipping steps, but instead we move methodically through the lesson in a hierarchical fashion expecting students to demonstrate their understanding of what we have told them without allowing them to express their own thoughts using a much more complex model. In so doing, are we retarding the learning of our studentsShould we all aspire to provide less information and allow students to expand their

cognitive horizon by demonstrating their ability to be creative beyond what we as educators typically fathom. Would this be disciple specific because some fields such as mathematics and chemistry require more instruction on the front end before students could analyze and process more difficult concepts? Although there may be some variability, Dr. Shapley is a mathematics instructor and demonstrated his ability to transcend and teach students in this unorthodox fashion. Maybe wider conversations need to be held concerning this concept.

The reflection portion by the students was also very telling. Students indicated how much they enjoyed the lesson. They emphasized that they especially appreciated that the lesson allowed them to use critical thinking. They further stated that this was a demonstration of level 3 (the highest level) teaching. One student even said that the presentation was amazing. He loved the ideas, the energy from the students, and the participation.

Whereas I originally though that the lady on the video was speaking too rapidly, one student made a counterpoint. He indicated that if we as professors continued to play videos at this rate of speed, it would force students to rise to the level of expectation and begin processing the videos more rapidly.

Truly, Drs. Shapley and Shope challenged my conventional thinking with this lesson. I say ‘Kudos’ to them for their utilization of interdisciplinary instruction to make a lesson become alive right before our very eyes. Also, I support them taking a risk and challenging our orthodox way of thinking about how inquiry should be done with a lesson study. Truly, this educator was rocked today and learned a valuable lesson.