

Learning environment: Safe culture

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"I do not teach anyone, I only provide the environment in which they can learn" (Albert Einstein).

The role of an educator is to create a learning environment culture where students feel safe to challenge ideas, be creative and critically incorporate concepts into their personal knowing. At times educators are only concerned about empiric knowing, having students learn accepted facts or truths and think in the post-positivist paradigm. It would serve educators well to remember that what counts as knowledge is influenced by many factors including those in power positions. In a formal learning environment, the educator holds the power for he/she assesses the learning and provides the grade. With this assumption, educators need to focus on creating equitable and safe learning environments that can be afforded within this reality.

"Asking 'Who am I'", the first article in this issue, emphasizes that it is imperative to understand ourselves and our students to help students integrate their learning. Not only is it important for students to understand themselves, it is equally necessary for educators to understand who they are, their biases and how they teach and learn and adapt to their environments. In another article, "Transitioning from the Central Teaching and Learning Centre", an educator developer shares her reflections on how successful her transition from one university to another required leadership, support and collegiality. As well, in "Professional Learning Community", faculty share their personal learning from a community of practice initiative that emphasizes how the environment is equally important for faculty to flourish and grow to become expert educators.

In the articles, "Web-Based File-Sharing in a Bachelor of Education Program" and "Scholarly Approaches to Learning Technology Integration in a Research-Intensive University Context", the benefits of inclusion of various technology into learning environments is discussed.

The remaining articles are about the processes in our classrooms. In "Student Reactions to the Integration of Fun Material in a High-Anxiety Subject" an educator decreases anxiety in the classroom by use of fun materials in order to improve learning. "Utilizing Experiential Learning in a Research Methods Course to Increase Value and Comfort in Research" creates comfort in the environment by have students participate in the process that they are trying to learn.

The final article in this issue "Research Interviews in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning" describes the methodology of interviews and argues that this method can be used to learn about student's experiences in our classrooms. If we were all to interview students about the environment we create in our classrooms, we could certainly use this knowledge to improve our learning environments.

It is necessary for all educators to practice cultural safety in their learning environments. Cultural safety is a term first introduced in 1990 by Irihapeti Ramsden, a Maori nurse in Aotearoa (New Zealand). Although cultural safety is a competency

required by the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia in terms of nursing practice, it is not an accepted standard in education. As I am a registered nurse and my clients are students, it is imperative that I practice cultural safety in the learning environment. The concept of cultural safety includes:

- Acknowledgement of difference; each one of our students is unique
- Respecting difference; each student has a unique history and way of being
- Self-reflection; understand ourselves and our students, our 's and our students' socio-political histories and biases (yes, we all have them)
- Social justice; to treat everyone equitably and allow each student to have a voice, to include all student voices, to include multiple perspectives and multiple ways of knowing.
- Understand we hold a position of power in the student/faculty relationship and create opportunities to learn together without the use of power

To me, practicing cultural safety creates a safe culture in the learning environment that addresses the educator's power position and respects the uniqueness and personal knowing of each student. I challenge each of you to reflect on the articles and learn more about cultural safety and create learning environments that are safe, encourage students/faculty to challenge ideas, be creative and learn critically together.