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Student Resistance: What to do When ‘Best Practices' Flop

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What To Do When ‘Best Practices’ Flop:

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Agenda:

- Context: Okay.. So I did it, and the kids hate it!
- Workshop Approach: Blended PBL & Boalian Theatre (dual purpose)
- Group Activity & Presentations on:
  - What Are ‘Best Practices’ & Why Should I Use them?
  - Looking Backwards
  - Looking at the Wo/Man in the Mirror
  - Looking forward (Reform Students to Come)
- Dealing with Change & Grieving
- Forum Theatre Exercise
- Summary & Email contact sheet
Okay..

So I did it, and the kids hate it!

- My job: Idea Factory/Researcher/Brainstormer
  - Students are motivated to work only if the work counts for grades and/if they see it has direct relevance to the test.
  - Students openly prefer a teacher-centered learning environment, where they write down ‘verbatim’ notes based on your presentation/lectures
  - They consider that you are “Not doing your job” if you do not lecture.
My Job continued:

“It has been estimated that 5% to 10% of participants will continue to use best teaching practices over time if ongoing coaching and support are absent.”

(Kohn, 2000, pg.49)
Workshop Approach:

- **PBL:** Starts off with a problem and participants share resources and learn together to find a solution.
- **Forum Theatre:** Boalian concept - based on ‘theatre of the oppressed’ used by grassroots organizations in South America.
The Trouble with “Best Practices” - A Play

- Dramatic read through to present the ‘problem’ / learning opportunity
Group Activity:

- 5 minutes total discussion time
- Choose the role you will take in your group
- With your role in mind, please discuss the question on your discussion sheet
- Be prepared to briefly share the main points of your discussion with the larger group
What Are ‘Best Practices’ & Why Should I Use them? (You said)

- Authentic
- Evidence based
- High buy-in
- Student-centered
- Constructivist
What Are ‘Best Practices’ & Why Should I Use them?

- Socio-constructivism embedded in competency-based approach
- Transition from teacher as ‘sage of stage’
- Group work based on real life learning experiences
Looking Backwards:
Causes of Student Resistance
(You said)
- Good to have both group work and individual work
- Set the context before sharing in group
- Foundation building
- Maturity of the group / demographics
- Each group accountable – pre-select
Looking Backwards: Causes of Student Resistance

- Competition – retraining required
- “Keep your eyes on your own work” of traditional exams/assessment activities
- Teacher burn-out = student burnout
- QEP reform of 1992 - stakeholders complained that graduates lacked social competencies, and creative and analytical thinking skills.
Looking at the Wo/Man in the Mirror (You said)

- You tend to use a written reflection where students are asked to reflect on what they did and what the teacher asked of them.
- You examine how students prepare for class
- One minute reflection before / after class.
- Summarize above
Looking at the Wo/Man in the Mirror

- What is your real buy-in rate?
- Do you have a clear vision of the desired outcome and have you communicated this to the students?
- Do we indirectly award compliance or encourage critical thinking?
Looking forward (Millennial Students) (You said)

- Different students = text savvy
- Value experiential
- Bored easily
- Receive & process
- Learning styles change from day to day – inventive teaching please!
- Hands-on, different learning styles
Looking forward (Millennial Students)

- Awareness of the learning process (how we learn to learn)
- Cross curricular competencies (methodological, organizational, analytical, language, etc.)
- New dichotomy in the classroom (a new concept of the classroom)
Dealing with Change:

- Make the class a safe space
- Predictable progressions
- Ellsworth “Teaching is impossible!” (1997)
- Repression, denial, ignorance, resistance, fear, same themes as psycho-therapy
- Teacher acts as guide, questioning students to make their own meaning
- Normalize the grieving process
The Grieving Process:

The Grieving Process for Coping with Change

1. Shock
2. Denial
3. Strong Emotion: depression; physical symptoms: Panic, regret/guilt/anger, resentment
4. Resistance: to return to The routine, withdraw
5. Acceptance: resignation, hope, “leap of faith”
6. Struggle: to affirm new reality, frustration
7. Better Understanding: impatient with Performance; Sense of direction
8. Integration

Performance
Current Level

New Level of Performance

Change

This chart was taken from a presentation given by P. Weissinger at the IINFD in 2007.

Reference: D. R. Woods (1994) PBL: Getting the Most from PBL

June 27, 2007

Course Design
The Trouble with “Best Practices” - A Play

- Forum Theatre - “Freeze” and improv based on what we have learned.
- A chance to consolidate our exchange.
- A chance to practice in a safe space.
Summary:

- Be aware of what you’re doing, asking students to do and the reasons behind it. Try to remember that change takes time and don’t get frustrated. Reflect some more…
- Thank you for your participation.
Please email me if you would like an emailed copy of this presentation, including the play and the modified slides.

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