

## Teaching and Learning in Professional Programs Supplementary Material

### I. The Experience of Teaching in a Professional Program

#### Questions to ask:

1. What are the similarities and differences between teaching in professional and nonprofessional programs?
2. What are some of the challenges in teaching in a professional program? i.e. bridging the gap between the academy and workplace?

#### Resources:

Domholdt, E. (2007). 2007 Pauline Cersoli Lecture: Sins of the professional programs. *Journal of Physical Therapy Education*, 21 (2), 4-9.

#### Pauline Cersoli's Sins of Professional Programs

1. Lip service to the liberal arts: We often fail to follow through in policies, procedures and actions. Too many required major courses. Too many early prereqs. Both limit student exploration.
  - a. More partnering with liberal arts
  - b. Curriculum would weave them into program, not "get them out of the way" at the start.
2. Believing the professional programs are different
  - a. We may engage less in the academic affairs: tenure, promotion, workload
  - b. We cut side deals, because we're "different"
3. Complaining about clinicals, professional certifications, internship supervision
  - a. We tend to be paid more, traditional faculty aren't sympathetic to our complaints
  - b. Clinical work is a way of keeping up professionally- wouldn't a historian love to get paid extra for keeping current?
4. Pedagogical stodginess
  - a. We may be great at sharing professional anecdotes but how effective are we at providing realistic opportunities to practice reasoning or other higher-order thinking skills?
  - b. How often do we provide students opportunities to view and critique their own or peers' performances?
5. Intellectual and social isolation
  - a. Allegiance: to the institution, the profession, or both?
  - b. Collaboration with other disciplines?
  - c. Social isolation?

## II. Faculty Recruiting and Cohort Composition

### Questions to ask:

1. What are the issues?
2. What are the right mix of faculty (i.e. Ph D, Professional degrees)?
3. What is the appropriate balance?
4. What are the risks/consequences of slipping too far in either direction?

### Resources:

Tuggle, C.A., & Sneed, D. (1998). Faculty in professional programs: The mix of experience and degrees. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, Spring, 14-22.

“Another study, commissioned by NBC’s Jane Pauley and dubbed the *Pauley Report* (Davis, P. & Zeigler, D. (1996). Tomorrow’s broadcast journalists: A report and recommendations from the Jane Pauley task force on mass communication education. SPJ Reports.) found that broadcast journalism faculty with significant professional experience are decreasing in number and are being replaced by Ph.D. holders with little or no media experience.” p.14

“This study reports the results of a mail survey of educators with terminal degrees and five or more years of professional experience, regarding the relative merits of each. Their perspective is important because journalism and mass communication education is in the throes of an identity crisis. At issue are programs’ efforts to serve two masters--the profession, which values work experience, and central administration, which often places greater emphasis on academic scholarship. At the same time, professors must also try to meet the needs of students. Survey respondents know all three masters and can speak to each side of the issue.” p.14

Students want both: “...faculty members who can teach them entry-level skills *and* provide analysis and speculation about where the field is heading.” p.15

On the costs of obtaining the PhD mid-career (professional experience + advanced degree): “The majority of respondents indicated that media professionals returning to pursue the Ph.D. could expect a substantial loss of income (66%) and indicated that other major considerations for professionals contemplating pursuit of a Ph.D. include: uprooting one’s family (68%), facing problems related to mortgages, rent, or housing in general (70%), losing seniority at a job and assuming student status (65%), and going into debt (77%)” p.16.

Factors motivating the switch:

Burnout Stress Need for a change New challenge	Reclaim personal life Encouragement from a colleague Desire to develop talent Intellectual curiosity
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“The respondents apparently have seen a certain amount of snobbery in the academy. They agree that some members of journalism/mass communication programs who hold terminal degrees but have little or no professional experience “look down on” “those with significant professional backgrounds but no terminal degree (57%). However, a higher percentage said the snobbery may be even worse in the other direction.... ‘Those who can’t do, teach.’ “ p.18.

Other issues related to professionals vs academics:

- Differences in productivity measures (what counts as scholarship)
- Who should teach what? Can academics teach professional skills as effectively?
- How can programs encourage mid-career professionals to switch to the academy?  
Sweitzer, H.F. (2003). Getting off to a good start: Faculty development in professional programs. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 34 (6), 263-272.

“Anyone who has taught or studied in a professional program knows that a more apt statement is “those who can’t do, can’t teach.” However, not all skilled practitioners make good teachers; knowledge of and experience with best practice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for success” p.263

“... the lack of systematic attention to preparing prospective college faculty members as teachers is well documented. However, some of these new faculty members in professional programs were not trained as scholars either” p.263.

“Thus, faculty members in professional programs may lack some of the scholarly tools and teaching experience that their peers acquired in graduate school,...” p.264,

**Activity: Host a Teaching and Learning round table of those who teach and do not teach in professional programs.**

Use sample conversation starters:

- What did you imagine learning in college/university to be about?
- What do you see your role as, when you teach \_\_\_\_\_?
- How do you teach the first class? What sorts of things do you do?
- In what ways, if any, does teaching first-years differ from teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year students?
- Do the majority of your students succeed? Why or why not?

- What are you hoping your teaching imparts to students?

Source: Adaptation from Leveson, L. (2003). Encouraging better learning through better teaching: a study of approaches to teaching in accounting. *Accounting Education*, 13 (4), 529-548.

### III. Learning in Professional Programs

#### Questions to ask:

1. Why is there a misalignment between what and how it is taught in the academy with the workplace?
2. Who should teach the students skills?
3. Why are skills so difficult to learn?
4. What is the most effective way of teaching and learning skills?

#### Resources:

How to convince students that what is done in class mirrors what will/does happen professionally. Group work is poo-pooed because students shirk and free-ride, as if they'll never encounter colleagues who do this in professional settings. Students know a lot of their behaviors are unprofessional, but they rationalize with "it's just school, I'll be different when I'm working."

Remedy: alter the context from the course to an employment-like setting. *"Framing these two courses as a job made us think more carefully about all of our classroom policies and procedures ... and whether we were effectively preparing our students for their futures in which they will need to be responsible and accountable for their actions."* (p. 66) Campana, K. L. and Peterson, J. J. (2013). Do bosses give extra credit? Using the classroom to model real-world work experiences. *College Teaching*, 61 (2), 60-66.

#### Misalignment between instructional practice and skills development

- o Faculty accustomed to lecture and other didactic forms of instruction may find adopting Socratic or discussion-based pedagogies frustrating (Grace, D.M., Gilsdorf, J.W. (2004). Classroom strategies for improving students' oral communication skills. *Journal of Accounting Education*, 22: 165-172.)
- o Typical classroom settings promote uni-directional forms of interaction like lecture and presentation. Bamber, E.M., Bamber, L.S., Vincent, G.L. (1985). Communication can improve your audit. *The CPA Journal (pre-1986)*, (March): 34-38.
- o Many assignments and assessments are structured. Post-graduation, problems are ill-defined and messy. *"In the jargon of cognitive psychology, students possessed conceptual and procedural knowledge (e.g., they knew what NPV means and they knew how to perform an NPV calculation), but they lacked schematic and strategic knowledge (knowing when and why to use NPV when confronting a messy problem). Faculty realized that the homework dimension of finance courses rarely focuses on teaching schematic and strategic knowledge. Rarely are students given messy*

*problems as homework. Rarely are they asked to produce sustained written or oral arguments justifying a solution in the face of alternative solutions and points of view” ~ p. 21 (Carrithers, D. & Bean, J.C. (2008). Using a client memo to assess critical thinking of finance majors. Business Communication Quarterly, 71(1), 10-26.)*

### **Conflicting priorities & Either/Or Mindset**

- o Content is king.
- o One consequence of a content first/only orientation assumes the two are mutually exclusive. Some aspects of skills development parallel the needs of students’ intellectual development.
- o In this light we need to see skills development not as something that can be ignored or seen as a ‘necessary evil’ forced on us by educational bureaucracy, but as an essential element of the path to providing a successful education experience.

### **Skills are/should be taught elsewhere**

- o The “limited space in the curriculum” justification has led to skills being taught in separate courses, instead of integrated throughout the curriculum.
- o Industry should take responsibility for giving proper orientation and mentoring to new employees.

### **Skills are better learned in professional settings**

- o The assumption is that a learner must see, hear and smell the real world yet simulation research has demonstrated that significant percentages of clinical learning can happen in a simulation lab.

### **Skills do not belong in higher education**

- o “It is interesting to investigate the possible consequences of this for education. One of the questions might be that, if we believe that these competences are elements of learning, whether this learning would need to take place at universities or whether it is a responsibility of employers” p. 155 (Wilson, R. M. S., Pierce, A., Allison, M., Hoogendoorn, M., Kral, B., & Watty, K. (2009). Accountancy and academic/professional inter-dependency (or mutual exclusivity?). *Accounting in Europe*, 6(2), 149–166.)

### **Student characteristics, attitudes & behaviors**

- o Students are unaware of how important skills are in practice. The divergence in students’ perceptions and professional expectations may limit students’ interest and effort regarding skills development (Stone, G., Lightbody, M., Whit, R. (2013). Developing accounting students’ listening skills: Barriers, opportunities and an integrated stakeholder approach. *Accounting Education: An International Journal*, 22(2), 168-192.

- o Some students have communication apprehension
- o Some enter college with remedial skills
- o Some students are in the profession because of parental pressure. Their parents see their children will always be employed if they are in certain professions, some want their children to have a career like they have had, and others want their children to take over a business. The issues arise when the student has minimal aptitude for the profession.

**Skills are difficult to teach and assess**

- o Large class sizes decrease instructors’ ability get to know students and limit opportunities to utilize engaging and interactive pedagogies (Bui, B. & Porter, B. (2010) The expectation-performance gap in accounting education: An exploratory study, *Accounting Education: An International Journal*, 19(1–2), 23–50.)
- o Discussions and small group interactions are challenging to lead. Evaluating quality, not just the quantity of participation presents challenges not found in assessment in formal contexts. Zaid, O. A. & Abraham, A. (1994). Communication skills in accounting education: perceptions of academics, employers, and graduate accountants. *Accounting Education*, 3(3), 205–221.

Morgan, G. J. (1997). Communication skills required by accounting graduates: Practitioner and academic perceptions. *Accounting Education*, 6(2), 93–107.

**The Bad News.**

*After more than 20 years of lamentation, exhortation, and little improvement, maybe it’s time to ask a fundamental question: Can critical thinking actually be taught? Decades of cognitive research point to a disappointing answer: not really. People who have sought to teach critical thinking have assumed that it is a skill, like riding a bicycle, and that, like other skills, once you learn it, you can apply it in any situation. Research from cognitive science shows that thinking is not that sort of skill. The processes of thinking are intertwined with the content of thought (that is, domain knowledge).* p.8 (Willingham, D.T. (2007). Critical thinking why is it so hard to teach? *American Educator*, Summer, 8-19.)

**The Better News.**

*What do all these studies boil down to? First, critical thinking (as well as scientific thinking and other domain-based thinking) is not a skill. There is not a set of critical thinking skills that can be acquired and deployed regardless of context. Second, there are metacognitive strategies that, once learned, make critical thinking more likely. Third, the ability to think critically (to actually do what the metacognitive strategies call for) depends on domain knowledge and practice. For teachers, the situation is not hopeless, but no one should underestimate the difficulty of teaching students to think critically.* p.17 (Willingham, D.T. (2007). Critical thinking why is it so hard to teach? *American Educator*, Summer, 8-19.)

### **Activity:**

1. Develop a list of skills students should have or develop in your program.
2. Code the skill by category: Basic (B); Learning (L); Metacognitive (M); Professional (P); Intellectual (I); Other (O).

Basic: Basic skills include fundamental academic proficiencies.

Learning: Learning and study skills.

Metacognitive: Metacognition encompasses the skills of self-regulated learning.

Professional: Professional skills are sometimes called soft-skills, workforce readiness, “non-cognitive,” or 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills.

Intellectual: Intellectual skills are the ones most teachers, students, parents, administrators and policymakers expect college graduates should develop by graduation.

### **Divide and Conquer**

- Essential intellectual skills: critical thinking, problem-solving, analysis of evidence, argument construction.
- Basic academic skills: college-level reading, writing coherently, calculating correctly
- Basic learning/study skills: time management, review strategies, attentive listening, note-taking
- Metacognitive skills: (Ambrose & Lovitt) assess prior knowledge, assess the learning task, plan, work the plan, monitor, reflect.

### **HOW?**

Step 1: Thoughtfully consider what knowledge students don't have. Don't get discouraged; the list might be quite long.

Step 2: Identify the knowledge and skills that are most essential for success with this content and in light of what students will be learning in their next courses. Pick 2 or 3 that can be targeted for development in the course.

Step 3: Plan how the skills will be developed. Few skills develop without explicit instructions. They don't just happen because students are in a learning environment.

- How will those skills be emphasized by what happens in class?
- What kind of teacher and student activities will promote the awareness and development of them?
- How can their development be incorporated into assignments?

- What kind of feedback will be offered to improve them?
- How will progress be monitored?
- How will they be assessed at the end of the course?

Step 4: Integrate this process beyond one course to the entire program of study. Skills taught early on could be built into subsequent courses. We do this in sequencing content- it's time to think of skills in the same way.

Benefits: Improved skills development for students; make life easier for teachers- wouldn't have to confront the impossible task of addressing all of them- just focus on a designated set of skills.

Source: Weimer, M. (Oct. 22, 2012). Targeted skill development: Building blocks to better learning. Faculty Focus. <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/targeted-skill-development-building-blocks-to-better-learning/>