

Name : Sibongile Madi

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Title: Addressing the Context for Success: What we do before we write ... in a Writing Centre at a University of Technology

Abstract : Writing for academic purposes has long been a critical issue for university students. When students are second language speakers and first generation University students the situation is often intensified. These students are often exacerbated by poverty, unemployment and poor health and also taking into account the personal and domestic circumstances. Students are perceived by their lectures as ‘abnormal’, ‘broken’, ‘need to be fixed’. The combination of these negative factors can easily induce feelings of low self-esteem. There is a high correlation between such difficulties and success and failure in university studies.

To attempt to address these deviations many universities have created ‘Writing Centers’. The Faculty of Arts and Design (FAD) at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) has established such a ‘Writing Centre’ to promote success in the use of spoken and written expression for academic purposes. In order to transform our process we need to adjust our beliefs and value systems. We believe that every student is entitled to the best possible attention and advice.

In this paper we will identify and describe the interpersonal interventions that attempt to improve the negative factors described above. We will also report on the student responses to these interventions. Through action research we will report the process we go through in addressing the question ‘how do I improve what I’m doing’ and the values and beliefs which inform these strategies. (250 words)

Name : Sundeep Singh

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Subtheme : Creating transformational communities of practice (*how do researchers collaborate with teachers/community groups to address educational and social issues?*)

Title : The Socio-Cultural Factors in Introducing Technologies in Rural Communities : The Challenges and Opportunities

Abstract : Sixteen years after the first democratic election, many rural communities in South Africa still lack potable water and power. Introducing these technologies to improve the quality of life in rural communities is challenging in many ways. The challenges include a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, and life style factors some of which can be anticipated, and some of which are often specific to each community. When these factors are ignored, overlooked or marginalized, the success of the project is frequently compromised, no matter how excellent the technology. The success rate of such interventions is often depressingly low. The effect of

failures in this regard impacts directly on the development of communities and the effective establishment of basic needs such as potable water and power facilities which enable improved levels of nutrition, sanitation, health, literacy levels, community management, education, and connection with further technologies.

At the DUT we are engaged in a number of projects which are introducing new technologies of the life enhancing variety to rural communities. In addition, we are also engaging in the social-cultural factors to maximize the success rate of these projects.

In this paper I will report on two projects taking new technologies to rural communities in which we are taking socio-cultural factors into account. I will report on the technologies involved, the socio-cultural interventions, their rationale, and my critical reflections about what I am learning in the process about meeting the challenges, and exploring the opportunities that present themselves as part of this journey.

Name : Graham Myers

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Title : Transformational communities of Practice in Research Methodology amongst Accounting students at DUT

Abstract : At the Durban University of Technology (DUT) the number of supervisors required to fully implement the teaching of Research Methodology, and the time available for one lecturer, to develop the research methodology capabilities of some 200 accounting students, is hopelessly inadequate. Many of the students do not know each other and feel alienated from the group in this alien subject. They require a method of linking in to the class, past classes and the academic community at large who can help them integrate in to the research process.

In this paper I will indicate how an e-mail list system is used to get students to communicate with each other, and me, so as to form a system of belonging. The objectives of this method will be examined and the implementation judged. Two past students who have been through this process will be asked to give their opinions and these will be compared to the objectives as set out.

Name : Naretha Pretorius

Institution : Durban University of Technology

With a focus on the following area of action-research: Creating transformational communities of practice (how do researchers collaborate with teachers/community groups to address educational and social issues?)

Title : My Journey of Awareness : Reflections on Objects and Places as Memory Triggers and Identity Indicators

Abstract : I believe that the election in 1994 of the first democratic government in South Africa has presented a challenge to all South Africans in different ways. I believe that one of the principal challenges that the 1994 elections presented to my conservative Calvinistic Afrikaner community is to address its personal, family, community, national and international identity/ies. Arising out of this perspective and perception, I have, and am, exploring my, and my family memory/ies to answer questions about my identity, through an action research living theories approach.

This paper introduces my 'journey of awareness' as an artist; a critical self-reflective inquiry in understanding my identity through the exploration of memory that is expressed and reflected through works of art. The paper unpacks a specific aspect of the reflective and creative process that focused on places and objects of meaning that formed part of my personal history, family or community. This has provided a platform for critical self-reflection as well as discussions between my immediate and extended family. The paper illustrates how the associations attached to these places and objects allowed for critical thinking and contextualisation that facilitated the understanding of my identity construct. The works of art not only allowed for creative expression and social critique, but also acted as tools for critical self- and community reflection. The paper finally demonstrates the transformation of the Self, but also, how this journey lead to the transformation of others, and further, the potential transformation of a larger South African community.

Name: Linda Vargas (Lynn Fernandez)

Institution: University of Kwa Zulu Natal

Either

Subtheme: Taking research to the classroom (classroom research exploring the question “How do I improve what I am doing?”)

or...

Creating transformational communities of practice (how do researchers collaborate with teachers/community groups to address educational and social issues?)

Title : “Flamenco Dance as Education (al).”

Abstract : I believe that flamenco dance taught from an education (al) perspective can encourage awareness of the interconnectedness of self and others and the expression thereof through movement. To dance is to imply action. E-motion implies motion. Here dance/action/emotions become inextricably linked. I believe that emotions are grounded in personal and social experience and thereby become linked to the values that they embody.

Dance as education (al) provides opportunities for the personal and social to resonate or transform.

Flamenco is holistic as it embraces the intellectual, physical, emotional spiritual aspects of self in one activity. It becomes education (al) when these aspects connect to personal and social values: when it acknowledges the value based interaction that takes place in the learning environment between teacher and learners. Children often naturally express their emotions through the active use of the body as expressive medium. If they are given the opportunity to experience dance as education (al) all aspects of being are allowed to become connected and operational. I believe it to be the right of all children to experience dance as education (al) due to the unique opportunities it affords for the integrated learning experience.

In this paper I examine some of the issues related to dance education in a global classroom. I show how I have used action research to teach flamenco dance with a holistic/education (al) approach in primary education. I also suggest ways in which this could be relevant to dance education as well as education in general. (250 words)

Name : Shubnam Rambharos

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Subtheme: Creating transformational communities of practice (*how do researchers collaborate with teachers/community groups to address educational and social issues?*)

Title : “Action research: Taking me from isolation, exclusion, marginalization and frustration to inclusion, respect, commitment and understanding as the extended curriculum programmes (ECP) coordinator at DUT”

Abstract : The introduction of the extended four year programme in Higher Education requires the development of innovative and flexible curricula that enables students to realize their potential and succeed (Scott, et al, 2007). At the Durban University of Technology (DUT), educators on these programmes are to a large extent part time staff that teach limited hours, have limited access to support structures in the departments and are excluded from decision-making processes about the programmes they teach on. As the ECP coordinator at DUT, I am responsible for developing and offering of interventions that assist these educators to enhance effective learning, teaching and assessment strategies by subscribing to the scholarship of innovative, flexible, integrated and authentic learning activities. I believe that the ECPs require educators that embody the values of love, caring, respect, understanding and commitment to making a difference to student’s chances of success. At DUT, I have established a critically reflective community of practice of educators that interrogates their learning, teaching and assessment practice, attitudes and values in a safe and supportive environment.

In this paper, I will report on interventions that I have implemented to improve my practice as the ECP coordinator. These interventions resulted from my concerns about educators feeling marginalized, isolated, incapacitated and frustrated in the classroom and their departments. I

will share my own and the lived experiences of the extended programme educators in the community of practice to identify our educational influences and the impact of the interventions on the curricula of the extended programmes. (250)

Name : Chris de Beer

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Title : Using blogs to make sense

Abstract : In the past I have found that my students were unable to document their creative process sufficiently enough to write a cohesive research report at the end of their studies. Even though they were encouraged to keep journals the diverse nature of the design process, as practised by jewellery design students, did not make for easy journaling and monitoring of these activities was difficult.

The proliferation of social networking media has provided opportunities for educational interventions not previously possible.

This paper will show how I use blogs and information technology to uncover the underlying theories/interests and methodologies of my B.Tech students. I will also demonstrate how the process of publishing affords a further opportunity to make sense of the journal entries according to the designer's interest and within the guidelines of the action research cycle.

Name : Farida Kadwa

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Title : Improving My Teaching Practice : Providing Transformative Opportunities for My Students

Abstract : Fashion Design is frequently and predictably associated with 'designer labels' and the 'high end' of the industry. In South Africa where there is a high incidence of poverty and unemployment, I believe that there are other considerations, such as the 'low end' of the industry, and the challenges and opportunities that this implies. While these are not historically the preoccupations of the Fashion Design course, it was clear to me that transformation was necessary, in order to address the needs of our communities, and increase the employability of our students.

In this paper I report on the educational influences that have impacted on my practice, and how I have improved my teaching practice with the fourth year research methodology students. I will convey how my efforts to improve my practice has impacted on my students' thinking in

the form of reflections by the students and myself. I will also demonstrate the capacity of my students to think critically and creatively about the demands of the current South African situation in their writing of the Theory of Clothing report for the B Tech degree.

Name : Joan Conolly

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Subtheme : Creating transformational communities of practice (*how do researchers collaborate with teachers/community groups to address educational and social issues?*)

Title : “Transforming our educational practice: Some critical reflections on the educational influence of self study

Abstract : Sixteen years after the democratic elections in South Africa, the higher education sector is still deeply troubled, and characterised by a lack of transformation of the curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment practices, and depressingly low throughput in both the undergraduate and post graduate sectors. Educators in the higher education sector bemoan the ‘underpreparedness’ of the incoming students, who are themselves deeply dissatisfied. Simultaneously, employers in all sectors are registering concern about the lack of relevant and usable skills and workplace capacities in graduates, and the rate of unemployment is rising. Clearly this is an untenable situation. Following Einstein’s injunction that “Insanity consists of doing things in the same way and expecting a different outcome”, we at DUT have instituted an action research self study program in the hope that this will break the logjam, and float our students down the river of success.

In this paper, I report the purpose, the aims and the strategies employed in the Self Study for Transformative Higher Education (SeStuTHE) project at DUT. I will share what I see happening in the group, in the institution, and in other institutions. I will report how my own awareness as facilitator and leader of the group has shifted, and how I am reflecting on my own efforts to improve my practice, and my educational influence not only among group members but also in the wider community. I will also share the impact that this project is having, including instances of success and achievement. (246 words)

Name: Bonnie Kaplan

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Subtheme: Creating Economic Transformation through Action Research: (*How do I assist in enterprise development through Action Research*).

Title : My Living Experience of Influencing and Creating Economic Independence for Others

Abstract : Many South Africans are seeking social and economic independence and security by trying to create their own businesses, often due to financial insecurity, unemployment and/or poverty. Since 2005 I have been engaged in training people who cannot find employment, and who are trying to become self-employed, working through the New Venture Creation (NVC) programme at the Clothing, Textiles, Footwear & Leather (CTFL) Sector Education Training Authority (Seta), Industry Training Unit, Durban University of Technology.

In the process, I have come to realize some shortcomings of my initial training programme due to unsuitable assumptions about the people involved, and the training interventions that have been used in the past. As a result of my desire to improve what I am doing, I have been devising interventions intended to address the perceived gaps in my original training plan. In the process, I have gained further insights into a field of business that I thought I knew thoroughly, and have learned much about the people I train, their capacities and needs, and their life circumstances.

In this paper I will describe the interventions that I have devised, and report on their implementation, as well as the evolution of new perceptions and understandings that developed as a result. I will provide evidence of the educational influence of these interventions, reflect critically on what has been done and achieved, and critically assess the way forward. (230 words).

Name : Kabulo Loji kabulol@dut.ac.za

Institution : Durban University of Technology, Dept. of Electrical Power Engineering, Durban, South Africa,

TITLE : COMBINED USE OF COGNITIVE EDUCATION WITH OTHER TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES TO IMPROVE PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS IN THE FIELD OF ENGINEERING STUDIES

Abstract. The field of engineering is characterized by problem solving skills and abilities both during the time of study and the time practice. Statistics show that these skills are particularly lacking in learners accessing universities with the aim of studying engineering. To date many causes have been mentioned and are being investigated. As a remedial solution, number of universities have started implementing the foundation or extended curriculum programmes (ECP) in order to address among others, the issue of under-preparedness of learners accessing tertiary education and to ensure mitigating of the high failure rate that the education system in South Africa is going through. In this paper I discuss and suggest how I have used cognitive education combined with other strategies, approaches and practices to improve problem solving skills and consequently reduce the failure rate. I will provide a successful sample case in which I will give an account of the action research strategy that I have used. I will also provide a comparative analysis of students' performance between ECP students and main stream students for the same subject. I will further reflect critically on my interventions, and add students' comments."

Key words: Cognitive thinking, Critical and Logical thinking, Teaching strategies and approaches, Problem solving.

Name : Delysia Timm

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Possible sub theme: Theorising action research

Title : Towards An Understanding Of The Biochemical Nature Of Learning.

Abstract : Transformation of learning and teaching is influenced amongst other things, by our own beliefs, values and skills. Our belief of learning is very often limited to processes occurring in the brain and does not take into account the kind of activity that makes learning happen in the whole being. Historically and currently, theories of learning espouse the notion of learning as a process of change. Change as an understanding of learning is demonstrated as behavioural change as a result of experience. The locus of learning is stimuli in external environment, internal cognitive structuring, affective and cognitive needs, and the relationship between people and environment. Sensory stimulation theory supports the notion that for greater learning to take place, multi-senses need to be stimulated. This theory does not provide the answer as to what is happening in the body when this stimulation occurs. My concern about the actual process of learning as a common experience for all prompted this study.

In this paper I explore an understanding of learning as a biochemical process within the whole human being - the mind and the body (Conolly & Timm, 2005). I will provide evidence of the biological underpinnings of human awareness as it is expressed in our emotions, beliefs and expectations. Human awareness influences how we respond to and experience our world and how we learn. I argue that there must be something that is common to everyone as to how learning occurs and that this is not fully socially or psychologically observable, but can only be usefully explored through understanding of biochemical operations. (223 words)

Name : Mikhail Peppas

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Either ...

Subtheme: Transforming the academy through self-study action research (*how does action research help academics to transform their curricula and practices in line with current contexts? How can action research be used to increase accountability for quality in higher education?*)

or ...

Creating transformational communities of practice (*how do researchers collaborate with teachers/community groups to address educational and social issues?*)

Title : Reflections along the way: Learning Life Skills and Photojournalism on the Streets of Durban

Abstract : The successful Photojournalist is one who is able to identify social realities, needs and injustices, and to collect telling evidence for publication on the spur of the moment, sometimes in threatening situations. In addition, Photojournalists have to be able to take effective photographs, and be aware of the legal implications of what they are doing. In short, Photojournalism makes its own specific demands on those who undertake this form of news gathering, yet very few of the knowledges, skills and values of Photojournalism can be learned from books. Even so, Journalism students are expected to have acquired these capacities, and developed them to a professional level in a relatively short period so that they can go out on assignment competently when they report for work.

In this paper, I will show how action research in the Photojournalism course at the Durban University of Technology contributes to the living experiences of first year students, so that they are equipped for success in the highly specialised field of Photojournalism. In the paper, I will account for the learning rationale, and describe the programme. A series of photographs taken in successive walks will show how both the quality and relevance of the photographs parallel the stages at which they were taken. The captions also provide insight into the ongoing development of both photographic and life skills. My presentation will include my own observations and reflections as mentor-participant, and also my own development as guide, mentor and fellow-pilgrim in these "walks of life". (249 words)

Name : Lee Scott

Institution : Durban University of Technology

TITLE: Using a Visual Voice to entice creative well being: Telling Tales

Abstract: As an artist and educator I have a philanthropic interest in people and have always imbibed stories. Stories are more than 'just stories'; stories let you in, let you learn about other's insights, let you into different worlds. I acknowledge that I have a 'voice' to tell my stories by putting brush to canvas. However not everyone has a 'voice', is able to express themselves verbally and conceptually with pen to paper or through the act of putting paint on a canvas. I believe that the ability to express ones self is fundamental to well being, and the personal growth I have experienced by being able to voice myself, endeavors my humanist approach to my personal and professional practice.

I have conceptualized a simplistic and playful approach to encourage people to share their stories and promote creative educational experiences. I have devised a set of playing cards with pictographic images on them. These cards encourage interaction and the playful nature of the concept elicits creative and sometimes thought provoking responses.

I will in this presentation, discuss and show examples of my pictographic cards and how these simple visual prompts are transformative tools. I have used them in a variety of situations but because of the brevity of this presentation, will focus on one of the workshops held at the Durban University of Technology. I will be talking about and showing one of the stories 'told' and performed by second year drama students. Their stories are the physical expression of their learning aided by these visual prompts.

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Name : Larissa Hassim

Institution : Durban University of Technology

Title : Towards transforming power relationships in a primary school classroom

Abstract : In my primary school classroom, I observe power operating in groups. There are groups that have power, and groups who do not. I believe that power imbalances of this kind thrive in societal systems that favour the strong over the weak, the popular over the less popular, and the advantaged over the disadvantaged. I observe that bullying in my classroom continues to happen because of this. I observe that pupils who are viewed as 'different' are teased, kicked, punched, pushed, shunned or called names by the more popular types. I believe that when such situations are not addressed and effectively dealt with, the effects are damaging for all concerned.

In this paper, I will show how action research can help teachers in primary schools to teach students conflict resolution skills which can address instances of bullying. In my presentation, I will reflect on instances of bullying in my primary school classroom. I will reflect and report on the effects of non intervention. I will also report on an intervention activity conducted in my classroom involving the use of positive and negative language, and reflect on its impact on students. I will use video documentation as evidence of the impact bullying and the interventions have had on my students. I will show students discussing the effects of bullying and the coping strategies they have developed.