TEACHING DOSSIER

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This Teaching Dossier is a work in progress document and provides a concise and reflective synopsis of my teaching and learning philosophy, contributions, outcomes and aspirations as a university teaching scholar in the field of education.

CONTENTS

1.   **INTRODUCTION**

As Senior Manager Strategic Curriculum Services in UBC's Centre for Teaching Learning and Technology my primary role is to promote excellence in curriculum development at the University. However I continue to teach in the Faculty Education.

I've taught at the tertiary level since 1998. This has included undergraduate courses in adult education, social foundations of education and sociology of education, as well as post-graduate courses in adult education, educational technology (increasingly referred to as *learning technology*), research methods and public health. Much of this has been at UBC, though I also taught at the University of Technology Sydney and University of New South Wales whilst completing a post-doctoral fellowship in Australia

My graduate work is in adult education (MA and PhD; both from UBC) although the focus was on community education related to HIV/AIDS prevention. Both programs presumed a solid understanding of andragogy, pedagogy, instructional design and best teaching practices. However like most of my peers in my MA program, I received no such training prior to teaching adults in private post-secondary schools (integrated ESL with a focus on tourism) beginning in 1994. However the wider university environment offered numerous professional development opportunities of which I availed myself whenever possible.

I have not taught in a face-to-face (F2F) environment for about five years. Today I teach in the Faculty of Education's Master of Educational Technology (MET) program, a wholly online post-graduate program. My course, ETEC565A, is the "applications" course, where students learn to integrate strategic decision-making with sound instructional design to create rich online learning spaces. It's an intensive, challenging course for students—and for me as the instructor! Each section of ETEC565A has up to 25 students; I teach between two and four sections per term…usually two (of three) terms per year. Demand for the course has been high and I have taught it for up to four consecutive teaching terms.

Students in the MET are education professionals, mostly working as teachers or school leaders in the K-12 system in British Columbia. Despite it being an educational technology post-graduate program, not all MET students are technophiles. A number enrol because it is a distance course: those living in rural BC either pursue graduate studies in education via distance—or move to be nearer a university offering such a program. There are material benefits for K-12 teachers who complete a post-graduate degree in education in BC: an annual salary increase of up to $10,000 per year.

I hope to teach in a F2F or blended/hybrid environment again, but I'm finding online teaching both fascinating and rewarding. I am, however, finding it difficult to source empirical studies on the effectiveness of different course designs and pedagogical approaches. The FCP hopefully affords me a chance to contribute to that (limited) literature.

This teaching dossier is a work-in-progress. It is reflective of my current perspectives, which have evolved over time and will continue to do so.

2.   APPROACH TO TEACHING & LEARNING

As an educator working in higher education I believe it's important that I understand-and, from an ethical perspective, endorse-much of what the university requires to demonstrate "learning." I could not work in higher education if I felt the enterprise served the interests of students poorly. I also see, however, multiple ways in which this enterprise can be shifted, refined and evolved into something that is learning centred (Chickering and Ehrmann, 1996) rather than learner centred (Anderson, 2004). From my experience having high expectations of students often means pushing them beyond (and through) their initial ideas of what can be achieved in a learning context…although many other students do not need this sort of cajoling.

Learning centred means that learning is, well, at the core of effective teaching. Though my post-graduate work is in adult education I find Knowles's (1980) notion of andragogy problematic. From my experience adult learners are not always intrinsically motivated, nor do they always wish to engage in self-directed learning. In higher education, a number of students are here to collect a credential, and to do enough work to achieve this. For them, learning is incidental to a credentialing process. Doubtless they all learn something during their studies; I remain unconvinced they learn what we think they need to learn much of the time. I say this without cynicism or guile: I have been that student. And I think it's legitimate for learners to enter a learning context for very specific, often material reasons. I think no less of my students who follow this tack, though I do think they sell themselves short when they allow credentialing to be the primary driver of their educational activities.

I view learning as a both a cognitive and social process—and therefore find both cognitive/psychological and sociological approaches to learning limiting and incomplete. I also belief that education—particularly public education—is the most liberating tool for social change known to man. Thus, the work of Freire (1971; 1973; 1997) where he describes "education as the practice of freedom" inspiring. Though I would argue Freire offers a specific model for adult basic education and an educational ethos, rather than a learning theory.

In term of adult learning theory, transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1981) comes closest to a satisfactory integration of the two. His differentiation between "meaning schemes" (specific nuggets of knowledge, usually contextualized in experience) and "meaning perspectives" (one's overarching understanding of life, a sort of detailed philosophy perhaps) resonates for me. My professional students often come into my courses in pursuit of meaning schemes, often competency-based. I endeavour to meet that expectation in ways that allow them to surface—and perhaps shift—their meaning perspectives, particularly related to technology, learning and pedagogy. I would define learning, therefore, as "the individuated and social experience of acquiring knowledge, examining beliefs, and developing personal agency."

Professional Education

With much of my teaching having been in professional programs (education, but also public health), linkages to practice have been integral—though none of the courses have had an explicit service learning component. However the degree to which students

comport themselves in a professional manner remains important—and a key aspect of how student performance is formatively and summatively assessed.

Students who successfully complete a degree at UBC often use their credential as evidence of their readiness for specific roles in the work world. Therefore, part of my responsibility as an educator is to ensure the work they submit to me will bear up to scrutiny. Any industrious student who completes a course I teach should leave with the competencies described in the course objectives. There's always a way to make it work if the student is willing to work. Always.

Flexibility in terms of process is, at times, appropriate--so long as the importance of producing polished, substantive work in a timely manner is not lost. To deliver work on time and to professional standards is critical to real-world success. Or, as I tell my students: "life is pass-fail: your work is either good enough or it's not. There are rarely chances for a 'do-over.'"

Any fluidity in standards is not to me the practice of social justice; rather it is the opposite. Assessing students' work to a lower standard because of their lived experience--with respect to gender, ethnicity or race, sexual orientation, social class, or dis/ability--is patronizing, and all too often perpetuates marginalization. Had I been held to a differing standard during my K-12 or undergraduate education because of my working class family, I would have been set up for success, rather than failure, later in life.

Methods

Depending on the course, students and institutional context, I employ a range of pedagogical strategies. Lecturing ("transmission") is not part of my core teaching toolkit, but I have used it—relatively effectively. More often I adapt Socratic methods and facilitate subject-oriented discussions. I do not assign readings for their consumption and regurgitation; rather I try to offer a range of resources with which students can ground themselves for subsequent learning activities. I tend not to validate "right" answers; I strive to direct students away from wrong ones. My methods place the responsibility for learning on my students, even as responsibility for their having the resources available to do so remains mine. Integrative assignments that require the synthesis of applied knowledge are at the core my approach to assessment. In the last few years I have found great utility in portfolio-based assessment—even as this has increased my assessment workload.

TPI

I have taken the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) previously at least twice; each time my scores have flattened out. This largely correlates with the broadening and deepening of my teaching experience, along with a more robust and varied pedagogical toolkit. When I first completed the inventory I worked almost exclusively in adult community education: as my teaching work has migrated almost entirely to higher education, so too have my scores evolved. I think this serves me and my students well.

My (somewhat) dominant perspective is Developmental, which, according to Pratt and Collins:

Effective teaching must be planned and conducted "from the learner's point of view". Good teachers must understand how their learners think and reason about the content. The primary goal is to help learners develop increasingly complex and sophisticated cognitive structures for comprehending the content.

The key to changing those structures lies in a combination of two skills: (1) effective questioning that challenges learners to move from relatively simple to more complex forms of thinking, and (2) 'bridging knowledge' which provides examples that are meaningful to the learner.

Questions, problems, cases, and examples form these bridges that teachers use to transport learners from simpler ways of thinking and reasoning to new, more complex and sophisticated forms of reasoning. Good teachers adapt their knowledge to learners' levels of understanding and ways of thinking.

Pratt & Collins, n.d.

I find this rather stunning to re-read: I use inquiry-, case- and problem-based learning extensively in my teaching. I recently delivered a professional development workshop at a private secondary school in Vancouver about problem-based learning, in fact. Upon reflection it is surprising I did not make this connection sooner!

In fact, not only my most recent TPI scores are interesting. The changes in my TPI scores between September 2011 and February 2012 have been intriguing, as indicated in Table One below:

	September 2011	February 2012	Notes
Transmission - all	**33**	**26**	intensions, actions dropped
Beliefs	10	10	
Intentions	11	7	
Actions	12	9	
Apprenticeship - all	**28**	**27**	little change; 4 point gap
Beliefs	6	7	
Intentions	10	9	
Actions	12	11	
Developmental - all	**34**	**33**	little change; well-aligned
Beliefs	11	11	
Intentions	11	11	
Actions	12	11	
Nurturing - all	**35**	**32**	lower beliefs only; 4 point gap
Beliefs	12	9	
Intentions	13	13	
Actions	10	10	
Social Reform – all	**29**	**25**	mostly lower beliefs
Beliefs	11	8	
Intentions	10	9	
Actions	8	8	

Table One: Synopsis of Egan TPI scores – September 2011/February 2012

I found three things particularly noteworthy. First, in my dominant perspective – Developmental – my beliefs, intentions and actions are well-aligned. Second, the four point gap between my beliefs and intentions for Nurturing perhaps demonstrates: 1.) I see the value of nurturing approach, but am perhaps less accepting of this, in terms of my own values; or, 2.) because I teach online I have to make a conscious effort to bring my "affective self"—my emotions—into what is largely a text-based, static environment. Finally, for Apprenticeship I accept that this perspective is one valued in professional education (particularly pre-service and professional development teacher training), even if it's not reflective of my own values as an educator; this perhaps explains why I have found the normative practices of pre-service teacher training at times distressing.

3. MAJOR TEACHING CONTRIBUTIONS

I have taught numerous courses at the tertiary level, sat on one student's magistral committee, delivered a few professional development workshops. I've also made a handful of scholarly contributions related to SoTL. All of these are detailed in the Appendix to this document. In my various roles related to curriculum development I have had a significant impact on the development of blended delivery models, curriculum alignment, and the effective leveraging of learning technologies.

Were I to identify my key accomplishments they would be:

- Co-authoring and delivering an innovative online post-graduate applications course in educational technology (ETEC565A)
- Receiving the University's Graduate Teaching Prize in 2001
- Publishing and presenting two SoTL papers at peer-reviewed conferences
- Shepherding the early development of a new post-graduate medical program in Australia.

ETEC565A has generated a great deal of interest both internal and external to the University. Numerous UBC instructors have been granted access to what is widely considered an innovative and exemplary course. There are multiple pedagogical approaches, shared and self-directed learning activities, and students almost universally produce work of a high professional standard.

The teaching prize was one of only ten awarded at UBC in 2001. During my magistral and doctoral studies I had taught undergraduate courses in teacher education, educational technology and adult education.

I have successfully written two conference papers (both for refereed conference proceedings) about ETEC565A. These have been examples of reflective practice, since I have not collected any data. Despite this limitation these have been well received at conferences. I hope to adapt these for publication in journals in the future.

While a lecturer at the University of Sydney (in medical education) I led the development process of the Sydney Professional Masters of Medicine Program (SPMMP). This unique blended post-graduate program filled a gap between general practitioners working in isolated or rural areas and fully trained specialist physicians. In much of rural Australia—and the entire developing world—accessing specialist care requires travelling hundreds of kilometres. The associated travel costs are often barriers to receiving care. However, having a GP closer to hand with solid specialist knowledge allows for better

diagnosis—and sometimes the ability to treat locally. I developed an unique blended learning model for the program, creating the course templates for required and elective courses, led professional development of teaching clinical faculty (as instructors or course authors), and designed a summative evaluation strategy for the program.

My primary role at UBC is Senior Manager Strategic Curriculum Services in the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology. In my role I provide consultative support and leadership on curriculum developments across the university. Some of this work is of the sort many assume a curriculum expert would perform, such as curriculum mapping, program level graduate attributes, and integrating multiple stakeholders' feedback into a cohesive curriculum. However, much of this work focuses on aspects of curriculum that might surprise some. I have supported initiatives related to the summative peer review of teaching, improving the outcomes from service courses that play an integral role in multiple curricula across the university, and evaluation and research studies related to major projects. I have also piloted a series of internal SoTL workshops for our CTLT staff, who have a depth and breadth of knowledge and experience that makes our unit a world leader—whose work needs to be better represented in peer-reviewed literature.

4. EVALUATION OF TEACHING: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

My first teaching assignment as UBC was in 1998. Back then the Faculty of Education ran its own student evaluation of teaching program via the Standing Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching, or SCET. On the last day of each course students were given both quantitative (Scantron) Likert-scaled questions about the course, its workload, the instructor and assessment. Students also received a separate form to give more detailed qualitative feedback. Several weeks after the marks were submitted we received a statistical summary of the quantitative data and the original qualitative data completed in the students own handwriting.

Like most instructors new to UBC I at first focused on where my scores landed in relation to the Faculty mean. Then I looked for the most negative data. Only then did I look for kudos. From the outset, SEoT data was something that presented challenges rather than opportunities.

As I taught more, my confidence increased—and my perspective on SEoT data did too. Rather than worrying about getting any negative feedback I expected—hoped to, in fact—get some from a minority of students. I began to see that more often than not the hypercritical data were provided by students who found my high expectations more of a complication than an opportunity to grow and learn. I also began to emphasize those (few) students who provided balanced feedback: positive and negative things, articulated in forthright and collegial language. There's a paradox here for sure: the better I felt about my abilities, the more confident I felt in my ability to contextualize SEoT data and find ways to make it meaningful. I had to figure all this out on my own though: there was no mechanism by which I was onboarded with the SCET process, no obvious person to go to discussion candidly (without jeopardy) the feedback so I could render it useful. Some mentoring earlier on in the process would have been really helpful.

In 2001 I received one of ten UBC Graduate Teaching Awards—ten years ago now, which seems incredible!

Currently I rely on SEoT data collected via UBC's CoursEval system, as well as formative feedback from students. From time to time colleagues ask to observe my course (usually if they will be teaching online in the near future), which also leads to some feedback. Previously I have had peers formatively—but formally—review my F2F teaching. I hope to broaden my current approach during the FCP. My evaluations continue to be mostly strong, with a minority of students who find my assessments too challenging—a good balance, to my mind.

On quantitative measures the median and mode scores are almost always at the top of the scale (some courses have been evaluated via CoursEval; others by the Faculty of Education's internal SEoT unit, which makes aggregating the data challenging, as each uses different questions and Likert scales). There are also a handful of students that see my expectations as too high, or my levels of support for them too low. But more students cite being inspired and are appreciative of my balanced approach with respect to giving additional support (help them develop a path that allows self-directed support rather than me merely giving them "the answers").

Broadly speaking, this feedback reflects:

- I have high expectations of my students
- Most feel I provide them the right amount of support to meet these expectations
- My courses provide students opportunities to work as a reflective practitioner
- I am passionate about teaching and learning

A fair summary methinks!

5. **GOALS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Participation in the Faculty Certificate Program for Leadership in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning has whetted my appetite for this sort of research work. I am committed to be a scholar of teaching and learning—more than an educator whose practice is scholarly informed.

When I applied for this program I had to decide whether focus on my teaching practice or my management role in CTLT for my research project. In fact, that distinction is not accurate: by focusing on doing a SoTL project on my own teaching I am also serving the interests of my role in CTLT. I liaise with members of the UBC teaching and learning community on a daily basis. I—all of us at CTLT, in fact—are viewed by many as educational leaders. Our recommendations, suggestions and mentorship has impact. So my decision to focus on what I teach was strategic in relation to curriculum: I am now able to describe as an insider to the process how a SoTL project can be developed.

There has been a convergence between my dual roles and SoTL as of late. Moving forward I have the following goals:

- Develop a structured, flexible SoTL initiative for CTLT staff, with workshops and mentoring program
- Get BREB approval for, conduct, and publish the results from my SoTL project
- Identify focal points in CTLT programs and services where the value of SoTL can be messaged

- Integrate more purposefully, a longer-term (5 year) SoTL plan for myself as a researcher.

These will doubtless provide numerous challenges—not the least of which is carving some time into my workload so these are part of my workload (rather than the "off the side of my desk" approach that currently is the norm). But the opportunities they present wholly outweigh the challenges.

6. REFERENCES

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MAJOR TEACHING CONTRIBUTIONS

Courses Taught

Institution	Session	Course	Enrolment
UBC	2011/12 W	ETEC565A ("Applications")	35
UBC	2011S	ETEC565A ("Applications")	83
UBC	2010/2011W	ETEC565A ("Applications")	38
UBC	2010S	ETEC565A ("Applications")	26
UBC	2009/2010W	ETEC565A ("Applications")	21
UBC	2009S	ETEC565A ("Applications")	71
UBC	2007S	EDST 428 (SOCL FNDTN OF ED)	34
UBC	2006/2007W	EDUC 500 (RES MTHD IN EDUC)	15
UBC	2006S	ADHE 327 (TEACHING ADULTS)	18
UBC	2006S	ADHE 327 (Teaching Adults)	15
UBC	2005/2006W	EDST 428 (Social Foundations of Education)	27
UBC	2005/2006W	EDUC 500 (RES MTHD IN EDUC)	27
UTS	2004 W	Community Education Strategies (015261)	
UNSW	2003S	Influencing Health Beliefs (MEED9013)	
UBC	2002/2003W	EDST 314 (ANALYSIS OF EDUC)	19
UBC	2002S	EDST 428 (Social Foundations of Education)	36
UBC	2002/2003W	EDST 314 (ANALYSIS OF EDUC)	33
UBC	2002S	EDST 428 (Social Foundations of Education)	33
UBC	2002S	EDUC 490 (Multimedia Pedagogy)	15
UBC	2001/2002W	ADHE 329 (Designing Short Courses, Workshops & Seminars)	10
UBC	2001/2002W	EDST 314 (ANALYSIS OF EDUC)	33
UBC	2001/2002W	EDST 314 (ANALYSIS OF EDUC)	34
UBC	2000/2001W	ADHE 329 (Designing Short Courses, Workshops & Seminars)	34
UBC	2000/2001W	EDST 314 (ANALYSIS OF EDUC)	26
UBC	2000/2001W	EDUC 490 (Multimedia Pedagogy)	15
UBC	1999/2000W	EDUC 490 (Multimedia Pedagogy)	15
UBC	1998/1999W	ADHE 329 (Designing Short Courses, Workshops & Seminars)	28
UBC	1997/1998W	ADHE 329 (Designing Short Courses, Workshops & Seminars)	31

Graduate Students Supervised and/or Co-supervised

Student	Degree	Major	Status	Institution	Role	Dates		Co-supervisors
						Start	End	
Jason Nickerson	M.A.	Adult Education	Achieved Candidacy	UBC Faculty of Education	Thesis Committee Member	Sep, 2007	Aug, 2009	Daniel J Pratt

Invited Presentations

Title	Conference or Event	Location	Date	Role
E-portfolios: A gaze across UBC	Teaching for Academic Growth e-portfolio community of practice	University of British Columbia	Feb, 2009	Presenter
Constructive Alignment: Tools for sophisticated instructional design	Teaching for Academic Growth Fall Seminar Series	University of British Columbia	Sep, 2007	Presenter
Atlas.ti: Qualitative Software	Qualitative Data Analysis Working Group	University of British Columbia	Mar, 2007	Presenter

Relevant Publications

Egan, John P. "E-portfolio formative and summative assessment: reflections and lessons learned". Proceedings Editor: Eli Cohen. *Insite 2012: Informing Science and IT Education* (12th Conference). 2012. Montréal, Canada:. (in press)

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