

A Lesson on Discourse Regarding Aboriginal Education

Utilizing the Principles of CIM, POE and CCM

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ETEC 530 - Dr. Diane Janes, Professor

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ETEC 530 Assignment #2



Please note: The requested 1 hr. instructional plan begins on DAY 3. (I got carried away as I really like this type of assignment).



Background:

Through discussions with educators there have been some frequently occurring comments that continue to be expressed regarding their comfort level and perceived ability to engage in discussions regarding Aboriginal Education in their classrooms. Through this lesson and activity series these comments will be addressed by resolving the assumptions underpinning these comments and to move the discussion forward.

Some of the most frequent responses are:

- “I don’t know enough about Aboriginal people to answer questions that might come up.”
- “I am not Aboriginal, so I would have trouble speaking for Aboriginal people.”
- “I do not have Aboriginal people or deal with Aboriginal issues in my class/work place, so this material is not really relevant.”

It may be useful to comment on these comments up front at the beginning of the first online activity in order to alleviate the discomfort that students may experience in raising the comments themselves. It may also be more time efficient to acknowledge these concerns and provide some ways of thinking about the assumptions that drive them.

Q. “I don’t know enough about Aboriginal people to answer questions that might come up.”

Educators often cite their lack of knowledge of Aboriginal issues as a source of anxiety during classroom discussions. The key point is to recognize that they do not need to be “experts” in Aboriginal histories and cultures to have an effective classroom discussion. The situations (*in the video for this lesson series*) that students discussed in their interviews had little to do with “facts” about Aboriginal peoples and histories,

and more to do with how difficult situations occur and how they are dealt with – or not dealt with – by instructors. This point may help educators feel that they can speak through their discomfort, rather than remain silent because of it.

Q. “I am not Aboriginal so I would have trouble speaking for Aboriginal people.”

It’s not the educator’s responsibility to speak for Aboriginal people. While it is important to recognize that educators are in a position of authority in the classroom, it might be more useful to think of teachers as being there to help students think through their comments, map out their assumptions, and develop more nuanced and less problematic ways of thinking and speaking about Aboriginal issues.

A related response that non-Aboriginal people have in discussions of Aboriginal subject matter is that because they are not Aboriginal, they have nothing to contribute to the discussion, or that they don’t know how to enter the discussion. As a facilitator, the educator may want to make a statement at the beginning of the first lesson that anticipates this concern. Such a response might be most effective if it includes the following points:

The significance of acknowledging social position and that their concerns about speaking reflect this;

- This doesn’t mean they don’t have anything to contribute to the discussion;
- Their understanding of the issues and white privilege contributes to the discussion;
- The ways in which you talk about this material matters;
- Acknowledging their social positions identifies the experience that they bring to the discussion, and that they don’t presume to have knowledge of the experiences of others who are also a part of the conversation.

Q. “I do not have Aboriginal people or deal with Aboriginal issues in my class/work place, so this material is not really relevant.”

It is worth questioning the underlying assumption of this kind of statement, since classroom discussions that include Aboriginal content do not solely take place in programs or courses designated as having an Aboriginal focus. A course on postcolonial critical theory, for instance, may include discussions of the history of colonization in North America and its impacts on Aboriginal peoples. A course examining social contexts of health issues might address the social dimensions of health issues affecting Aboriginal people. Likewise, a course on critical issues in special education would also discuss the impact of public education and residential schools on Aboriginal peoples and potentially delve in to the various rationales for why Aboriginal students are still over represented in four Ministry of Education special needs categories in 2012.

Reference: The information above has been re-worked from the work of Crey, K. & Perreault, A. (2008). What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom. First Nations Studies Program, UBC.

Over Representation of Aboriginal Students in Special Education:

Over-representation of Aboriginal students in populations of students with special needs has been well documented both in research literature and in the data collected by the Ministry of Education of British Columbia in its student-level data collection system (McBride, 2001). The Aboriginal student population makes up 11% of the total student population in BC. Of the 63,899 Aboriginal students in the province in January 2012, 53% were identified with either sensory, learning or behavioural disabilities. This background information is not meant to insinuate that these statistics are in error, but it is meant to give us reason to pause to contemplate other reasons why Aboriginal students may not be prospering in the BC public school system.

Lesson Plan Title: Evolving Educational Discourses

Course Materials: Developed from Crey & Perreault, “*What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom*” from the UBC First Nations Program. In addition, an essay “*Cognitive Assimilation, Culturalism, and Diversity: Evolving Educational Discourses for First Nations Students*” by Marie Battiste was also used.

Course/Subject: MEDS 530– Critical Issues in Special Education.

Duration: 1 hr.

Course Mgmt. System: WordPress Blog and ProBoard (free) Discussion Forum

Audience: Second Year Masters Students – Vancouver Island University

- The students in this course are already classroom teachers. This course is aimed at making these teachers more comfortable with having the important conversations with their students regarding assimilation, culturalism and diversity as it relates to Aboriginal Education (both past and present) in BC.

Prerequisite Skills: Certified Teacher

Materials/Equipment: PC or Macintosh with Internet connection

Purpose and Rationale: The purpose of this lesson is to assist the master’s level students in this course to better understand that public education is in the process of overcoming a long history of institutional racism. Our experiences are an effect of this history, and while the issues are troubling and complex, allowing them to remain unacknowledged would mean participating in this history; confronting these issues and taking part in thinking about ways of addressing them is where there is hope.

There is no “one way” to address this issue; teachers will have to respond to situations as they occur. The materials included in this lesson are meant to provide a springboard for discourse that can be adapted and developed further for anyone who is willing to conduct a similar workshop (for adults) on culturally and politically sensitive issues.

Application of Constructivist Principles to this Lesson:

The following chart will assist you in understanding the constructivist principles of the CIM, POE and CCM models and how they will be applied to this lesson.

CIM (Driver & Oldham, 1986)

Criteria	Application to this lesson
Identify learners' views and ideas (prior knowledge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brainstorming session on possible reasons for there being a high number of Aboriginal students identified with special needs. Make predictions as to why. ▪ Use CMap to create a concept map of prior knowledge of Assimilation, Euro-centrism, Aboriginal Culturalism and Diversity. ▪ Read the essay. ▪ Personal Reflection on issues that arose from the essay. What assumptions did the essay challenge? ▪ Update concept map. ▪ Preview the Online Video Presentation: What I learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom ▪ Online Discussion: Post and respond to individual reflections. ▪ Provide stimuli (guidance and discussion) about ground rules for online discussions). Use online
Create opportunities for the learners to explore their ideas and test their robustness in explaining phenomena, accounting for events and making predictions	
Provide stimuli for students to develop, modify and where necessary, change their ideas and views	
Support their attempts to rethink and reconstruct their ideas and views	

	discussions to assist students in modifying their ideas and views.
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POE (White & Gunstone, 1992a)

Criteria	Application to this lesson
Given a situation, learners are asked to predict and explain the next outcome;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preview the Online Video Presentation: What I learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom ▪ Predict how to use this information to guide them in their own classroom discussions with their students. ▪ Predict answers to the tough questions. ▪ Review specific video sections and test predictions with peers. ▪ Individual Reflection regarding assumptions of Aboriginal students ▪ Online Discussion: Asking the important questions and providing explanations for observations and predictions. ▪ Developing new understandings of the discussion content and methods of hosting such a discussion. Determine who to ask or where to find the answers to the important questions. ▪ Review, reflect and check for new understandings. ▪ Practice the new skills in the classroom.
Learners test their predictions and explanations by making accurate observations	
Check observations against their predictions and explanations	
If the observation is inconsistent with their predictions and explanations, then a search for appropriate explanation should be promoted	
New understanding should be reinforced through practice problems, questions and activities	

CCM (Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982)

Criteria	Application to this lesson
To seek new understanding, there must exist a dissatisfaction with the existing conception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Present students with the data that indicates a high number of Aboriginal students identified with special needs (over-representation).
The new concept must be intelligible (meaningful)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion about what the data means and why this is a critical issue.
The new concept must also be plausible (reasonable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion about how to manage a classroom discussion in which there is awkwardness.
The new concept must be fruitful (able to satisfactorily resolve the mental conflict or dissonance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formulate new concept as to why this over-representation may exist. ▪ Formulate ideas regarding best practice for such discussions in the classroom. ▪ Flowchart Activity regarding video incident. Create new outcomes/solutions for such incidents in the classroom. ▪ Update concept map with new information ▪ Online Discussion forum

Objectives

Course Objectives:

- Identify and discuss issues concerning Aboriginal content and develop an ability to hold this type of discussion in a classroom;
 - Preparing for effective classroom discussions;
 - Map out assumptions that we hold and maintain regarding “what we think we know vs. what questions we need to ask”;
 - Develop a sense of “ease” with asking questions that have no “easy answers”;
 - Develop a list of suggestions for best practices in the classroom when having discussions that involve Aboriginal context; and
 - Consider the many reasons why Aboriginal students may not be prospering in the BC public school system and what can be done to better support their success.
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Activities

Day 1:

Objective 1: *Identify and discuss issues concerning Aboriginal content and begin to develop an ability to hold this type of discussion in a classroom;*

Initial Activity: Create a Concept Map using CMAP regarding the key pieces of information that you know about Aboriginal Education in BC. Include any facts that you know, history, culture etc. Maintain this concept map as your journey through this lesson and submit it via email to your instructor when you have completed all the activities.

Pre-Reading: Please read Battiste, M. (2009). Cognitive Assimilation, Culturalism, and Diversity: Evolving Educational Discourses for First Nations Students. In J. Lupart, A. McKeough, M. Porath, L. Phillips, & V. Timmons (Eds.), *The challenges of student diversity in Canadian schools: Essays on building a better future for exceptional children* (pp. 189-222). Markham, ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

Personal Reflection: What issues did this essay raise for you? What assumptions did it challenge for you? Did you learn something that you didn't already know?

Day 2:

Activity 1: Please watch the Online Video Presentation by clicking the link below and then clicking on the "Edited Video: Student's Speak" icon to the left:

- [What I learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom](#)

Activity 2: Individual Reflection in the [Online Discussion](#) (10 Minutes)

The issues raised in the online video are sensitive and you may find it difficult to process your thoughts immediately after watching it. This activity is comprised of a free-writing exercise as a way for you to reflect on what you have watched and to work through your thoughts. Your thoughts and reflections on this video will serve as an effective method of moving into the discussion.

Day 3:

Objective 2: *Preparing for effective classroom discussions;*

Activity 3: Setting the Ground Rules for the [Course Discussion](#) (10 Minutes)

It is never easy or "comfortable" talking about racism or ignorance. Because this lesson is about culturally sensitive material it is important that we create a space that is conducive to shared

learning and one in which you feel that you can take part in the discussion. In order to do this, it is useful for us to develop ground-rules for our online discussion through a collaborative process.

Please review this website on the use of ground-rules for class discussions. To help you with this exercise some examples of ground-rules are as follows:

1. **Speak from your own position or experience.**
 - A. Not speaking from your own experience can lead to situations where students speak from misinformed positions with problematic assumptions.
 - B. This ground-rule helps students share with the group what they do know from their own experience, reducing tendencies to reiterate problematic assumptions.
2. **Don't get hung up on terminology.**
 - A. Some students have expressed that they are concerned about using "correct" terminology, and as a result, they often feel that they shouldn't speak or participate in discussion.
 - B. Acknowledging that terminology can be confusing can help to engage students in a discussion of terminology that may be more appropriate for the subject matter.
 - C. "Aboriginal" and "First Nations" tend to be broadly accepted in Canada, but there are cultural, social, and political nuances to these terms as well that sometimes make them exclusive of other indigenous groups, such as the Métis and the Inuit.
 - D. Terminology is rarely without contention, and this is an area to be conscious of when engaging with Aboriginal subject matter.
3. **Acknowledge that there will be discomfort.**
 - A. Talking about difficult cross-cultural issues is never easy, but acknowledging discomfort may help workshop participants to feel that they can speak through their discomfort, rather than remain silent because of it.

More ground-rules will be added based on our class discussion. Your instructor will monitor the online discussion and compile the list of ground rules. [Please do not continue past this activity until the ground rules have been set.](#)

Objective 3: *Map out assumptions that we hold and maintain regarding "what we think we know vs. what questions we need to ask";*

Activity 4: Theme Building Exercise (from free-writes) using Online Course Discussion Forum (20 Minutes)

Your instructor will keep track of *key words* brought up in the free-writes. Themes will be created that will include as many of the key words as possible. Once the themes have been identified, they will be added to our online discussion forum for activity #4 as a new discussion thread titled *"Themes from Free-Writes"*. [Please do not continue past this activity until the Themes have been identified and communicated back to you via the discussion thread.](#)

For example, the following theme was prepared with key words from the video that was watched in activity #1.

THEME	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Racist comments ▪ Alienation ▪ No intervention ▪ Impact on students 	<p>“Dealing with incidents in peer discussions”</p>

Activity 5: Revisiting Themes from the Video (20 Minutes)

You have identified very important issues in your stories and reflections from Activity #4. This activity gives you the opportunity to revisit specific situations and comments (from the video) in order to personally reflect on the dynamics that went into making that situation occur.

In order to go deeper into situations raised in the video, you can revisit clips such as those that have been identified in the example below.

For this activity please make notes of your thinking and reactions to the video for use in the next activity.

For example if you are using the theme “dealing with incidents in peer discussion” from the theme building exercise above, you might do the following: **Workshop Playlist: Video Clips: 8.3 and 8.4 (Vicki George)**

- In these clips, the student speaks about an incident that happened in one of her classes where she was challenged for questioning another student about racist assumptions about Aboriginal people. In this situation the instructor’s response was considered inadequate.

Revisit Video Clips 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 (Vicki George). Post your response to the questions posed below to the discussion forum located here: **Activity 5: Discussion Questions A**

1. What about this situation made this student uncomfortable?
2. What was the impact of this situation on this student in this clip?
3. List the consequences experienced by the student as a result of this situation.

Revisit Video Clip 8.15 (Vicki George). Post your response to the questions posed below to the discussion forum located here: **Activity 5: Discussion Questions B**

In this clip the student discusses her instructor's reaction to the situation by posing the question, "Is there anybody who wants to respond to this?"

1. Why do you think the instructor asked the class this?
2. Can you think of other ways the instructor could have reacted to this situation?

Revisit this clip [8.12](#) (Vicki George). Post your response to the questions posed below to the discussion forum located here: **Activity 5: Discussion Questions C**

How might this situation impact others involved in the situation:

1. Other students? How might they have perceived this situation?
2. The instructor and the student's relationship to the instructor? (see video clip [8.12](#) (Vicki George))

Objective 4: Develop a sense of "ease" with asking questions that have no "easy answers";

Activity 6: Flowchart and Best Practices (20 Minutes)

After an incident takes place in class, students frequently discuss experiencing a significant amount of anxiety, and often find it difficult to return to the class after a racist comment was made or a situation was not handled appropriately. The student in the video comments on what she went through as a result of this situation.

The objective of this activity is to examine how an incident, when not addressed, can develop and how the negative outcomes can be exacerbated the longer that it goes unaddressed. This is also a good opportunity to formulate questions and as a group develop some possible answers to address them.

Using a Word document create a flow chart of this class incident from the video. In a different colored pen circle points where interjection into the situation might be possible, and note the party or parties who are responsible for initiating the interjection. Detail what these interjections might be, and explain their effectiveness. Below your flowchart list questions that arise for you from this type of discussion.

Post your flowchart for your peers to reflect and comment on. Please comment on three of your classmates flowcharts. Please post your flowchart to the online discussion forum located here: [Online Flowchart Activity](#):

Objective 5: *Develop a list of suggestions for best practices in the classroom when having discussions that involve Aboriginal context;*

Activity 7: Best Practices (5-10 MINUTES)

Please create a list of best practices for embracing such truly beneficial learning environments in your classroom. What are some of the elements of class discussion that you'll want to include? What are some cultural components that you'll want to include? What are some ways that you can handle comments from students that could appear to be racist?

Post your Best Practice suggestions to the class online form located here: [Online Form for Best Practices](#)

Objective 6: *Consider the many reasons why Aboriginal students may not be prospering in the BC public school system and what can be done to better support their success.*

Day 4:

Activity 8: Please make final changes to your concept map and send to your instructor via email. Be sure to add information from online forum discussions, reflections and the concluding comments below.

Concluding Comments:

All available research confirms what is already known and reflected in the collective wisdom of the Aboriginal community and of school district personnel. That is, that those districts that most closely adhere to what is described in the literature as good educational practice are the districts that appear to have the most success in the education of Aboriginal students and the lowest rate of behavioural problems (and over representation in special education categories).

These school districts tend to:

- have open relationships with the Aboriginal community
- encourage staff to reach out to the Aboriginal community
- have expectations for Aboriginal students that are in keeping with all other students in the system
- recognize cultural diversity in the school culture and traditions
- use creative and pro-active methods for staffing to include Aboriginal people
- emphasize the role of Aboriginal support workers in providing academic and behavioural support as part of the school-based team
- create a welcoming environment for parents and children in the school
- keep parents informed and involved
- identify problem behaviours earlier

- conduct careful and thorough assessment of student strengths and needs using a combination of classroom-based criterion-referenced assessment, functional assessment and standardized assessment
- have a high degree of precision in describing problem behaviours and developing strategies to address them
- develop careful individual plans, review them regularly, and systematically monitor progress
- use a team approach to problem-solving
- network with community agencies and pro-actively include them in planning for the child

Lesson Evaluation Rubric (using ✕ and ✓)

A tally of ✓'s greater than 15 would indicate sufficient constructivist activities to warrant this an online lesson utilizing constructivist principles.

	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4	Activity 5	Activity 6	Activity 7	Activity 8
Communicate dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs								
Demonstrate activation of prior knowledge								
Communicate the new desired practice that is meaningful and reasonable								
Demonstrate ability to make predictions								
Make observations for comparison to previous understandings and explain the differences								
Lesson provides opportunity to rethink and/or reconstruct their views or understanding								
Demonstrate engagement in new learning through practice and/or questioning								
Demonstrate ability to communicate clearly and justify changes in understanding								
Demonstrated engaged in authentic activity with								

personal meaning								
Demonstrated ability to plan, evaluate and reflect in the learning process								
Demonstrated proof of resolution to the initially stated dissatisfaction								

References

- Battiste, M. (2009). Cognitive Assimilation, Culturalism, and Diversity: Evolving Educational Discourses for First Nations Students. In J. Lupart, A. McKeough, M. Porath, L. Phillips, & V. Timmons (Eds.), *The challenges of student diversity in Canadian schools: Essays on building a better future for exceptional children* (pp. 189-222). Markham, ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside.
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Appendix

Personal Reflection on this Lesson Series

It may be obvious that I got a little carried away with developing this lesson and series of activities and probably went a little deeper than was necessary - but the personal constructivist learning was outstanding! I really enjoy this type of assignment where I get to create an online learning environment! Therefore, for the purposes of completing this assignment #2 - Day 3 of the activities marks the beginning of the 1 hr. of instruction time for the purpose of this assignment and, as the assignment stated, the 1 hr. would actually be longer online as the pieces cannot be completed individually (without time for peer discussion in the online forums) or all at once.

Next, I am delighted to have discovered the wealth of information, free for use for educational purposes, developed by the First Nations Program at UBC (Crey & Perreault, 2008). I have used much of their content in this online lesson development. They are credited in the reference section and in a few other places throughout.

I am also very fortunate to have located the opensource software associated with ProBoard for creating the online discussion forms used extensively in the lesson activities. The lesson is housed within the UBC Blogs.

The lesson framework that I used has been greatly adapted from one that I created for the course that I taught this summer in special education at the local university. The reason I included it there was because of the over-representation of Aboriginal students in four of the Ministry of Education special needs categories. I turned the originally intended "brief" discussion into a "full day of inquiry" about our beliefs and attitudes regarding Aboriginal Education and why we must ensure that no students are wrongly placed in special education due to cultural, linguistic or other diversity-based reasons. It was an eye-opening experience for me to host such a discussion as a non-Aboriginal. I was expertly guided in my preparation (five weeks ago) by the District Principal for Aboriginal Education from School District 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith), Ms. Laura Tait. I want to extend a sincere appreciation to Ms. Tait for the encouragement she gave me to take on this lesson content despite my initial apprehension. I accepted the challenge to "pry open" the long-held assumptions that sometimes go unchallenged in our discussions.

In using the content created by (Crey & Perreault, 2008) I have developed what I believe to be a truly constructivist lesson based on the three models that we have focused on in this course; namely the constructivist principles of the CIM, POE and CCM models. The charts included in the Blog lesson section titled "Constructivism" identifies the activities that align with each specific model.

The initial activity to kick off the lesson is a personal brainstorming session for each student on their background knowledge of Aboriginal Education. They are to create a concept map and maintain it throughout the course. The online lesson gives them the details and also the link to download CMAP. This online concept map is easily modified by the students as they brainstorm, then through reflection as they complete activities and make changes again due to discussion forum activities and more reflection as they challenge their assumptions.

In the next activity I wanted the students to contemplate their personal views and prior knowledge using a wonderful essay by Marie Battiste as the impetus for reflection. I wanted the students to contemplate, in private, their own possible Euro-centric views and have them reflect on what they could do to blatantly explore this Euro-centrism in terms of guiding student conversations in their classrooms.

Once online in activities two – eight I would encourage students to probe their beliefs and ideas about Aboriginal education, over-representation in some special needs categories and our own wide-spread Euro-centric views that we, most times unknowingly, bring with us into the classroom.

In the eight activities that I have created there are many opportunities for students to make predictions about what is behind the actions of individuals in the video. Then, through the online discussion forums, the students will have opportunities to change and/or modify their ideas/conclusions and also to build upon them in relation to the lesson objectives.

The Constructivist Instructional Model (CIM) provides the best fit for this lesson series, however, all three models have been utilized and incorporated. The CIM model is initiated with the search through the student's background knowledge and thorough exploration of their content knowledge and beliefs on Aboriginal education. Then, as in the other two models, predictions are made and new learning is constructed through the personal and peer challenges, and reflection.

The Prediction, Observation and Explanation Model (POE) provides students with the ability to observe a situation and make predictions as to how to best guide the discussion and/or solve the issue. They can then test their predictions in their own minds as they watch the video segments and then discuss their predictions with their peers online. They can then practice their new learning online with their peers in preparation for the "real life" discussions they will have in their own classrooms in the future.

The Conceptual Change Model (CCM) indicates that new knowledge construction results from connections with pre-existing ideas/information. As students are invited to investigate and challenge their beliefs through the activities they will discuss their dissatisfaction and enter into generating new meaning. In this way the topic becomes immediately meaningful, challenges their predictions or initial ideas, and because the discussion forums provide students with the ability to exchange their ideas, it provides authenticity to the discourse and as such, greater meaning and new learning.

This was a fantastic exercise and it was truly a learning experience. Due to the work and effort that went in to creating this series of online lesson activities, I am looking forward to using it in the future in my university teaching. I will also share this lesson with Ms. Tait in Aboriginal Education to determine if it can be useful to her in her work.