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Teacher Self-Assessment

Alex Fancy is a Professor of French at Mount Allison University. A 3M Fellow and recipient of the Distinguished Teacher Award presented by the Association of Atlantic Universities, he has won recognition for his dedication to teaching. Professor Fancy has had a long association with the theatre; his bilingual acting troupe, Tintamarre, has toured universities, schools, and colleges throughout Canada. In this issue of *Focus*, Alex Fancy combines his love of teaching with his theatrical experience to introduce an innovative approach to teacher self-assessment.

Introduction

The following questionnaire is based on the notion that both teaching and learning are characterized by *performance*, whose most elusive characteristic is *rhythm*. Rhythm is the dynamics of repetition and variation, two characteristics essential to teaching.

Teachers must find their own rhythms which they might eventually define in terms of their subject, objectives, experience, character, and context. It is hoped that these questions will promote this kind of self-awareness, and that they will allow for a heuristic approach to teacher self-assessment.

Not all questions will be important to all teaching. In fact, they might first be *ranked according to their importance* (1 = "not at all important" to 5 = "extremely important"). The *rank of importance* for each question could then be compared with the *self-assessment* (1 = "not at all successful" to 5 = "extremely successful"). A high *rank of importance* with, for the same question, a low *self-assessment* would be a prime indicator of a problem.

Although the questions are intended to encourage self-assessment, it could be interesting to discuss their importance with other teachers. Self-assessment can be aided by observation and/or video, particularly where questions of delivery are concerned. *Contact the Office of Instructional Development and Technology to consult our resources on this topic.*

Questions

Importance Assessment
(1-5) (1-5)

Rhythms in the Course or Unit

Exposition (or "anticipatory rhythm")

1. Are specific objectives articulated at the outset?
2. Are at least some objectives prescriptive as well as descriptive (What skills or abilities can students expect to develop or refine)?
3. Are the objectives informed by a "vision" (commitment to the search for truth, or the value of a certain discipline, or the elucidation of certain issues, or the need for certain skills...)?
4. Are the objectives realistic? Do they convey what cannot be achieved in the time available?
5. Is the teaching method explained to students?
6. Are evaluation procedures explained? In class and in writing?
7. Are all important dates communicated to the students at the outset? Or sufficiently in advance?
8. Are test expectations clearly explained?
9. Are assignment and project expectations clearly explained?
10. Is student attention engaged early in the course or unit?
11. Is the teacher's engagement with (love of) the subject communicated to the students?

Continuity

12. Is there regular reference to objectives?
13. Is there regular reference to major themes?
14. Are there both minor and major themes?
15. Does each "episode" have a theme?
16. Are the "episodes" linked?
17. Is the relevance of each "episode" clear to students?
18. Is there continual anticipation of "episodes" to follow?
19. Does the teacher create suspense and engage attention?
20. Is there "colour commentary"? (Where have we been? Where are we going?)
21. Is the pace even without being monotonous?
22. Is the pace varied without being confusing or disruptive?
23. Do students help to determine the rhythm of the course?

The 'Dénouement'

24. Will the course or unit have a climax (a logical conclusion which arrests the attention of the participants and ensures their attendance at the final classes)?
25. Will the course end with questions, problems, or challenges (or perhaps an event) designed to encourage students to continue their interest in the subject?
26. Are examination questions and other evaluative procedures logical in light of the objectives, content, and activities of the course?
27. Is there opportunity for students to evaluate the teacher anonymously?
28. Are there opportunities for students to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the course in the absence of the teacher?
29. Does the course promote professional goals?

Questions

Importance Assessment
(1-5) (1-5)

Rhythms in the Individual Sessions

The Rhythm of Activity

30. Are "exposition" (explanation) and "action" (demonstration) appropriately balanced?
31. Are theory and practice appropriately balanced?
32. Are information and reflection appropriately balanced?
33. Do the "spectators" have adequate opportunities to become "actors"?
34. Are "spectators" encouraged to feel like participants?
35. Are there opportunities for "creativity" (use of the language of the discipline by participants to formulate questions about their world and their personal circumstances)?
36. Are the evaluations of student work appropriate?
37. Do the evaluations happen at appropriate times?
38. Do students sometimes help to determine the rhythm of a class?
39. Are students aware of the teacher's concern for rhythm?

The Rhythm of Moods

40. Are there moments of both high energy and relaxation?
41. Does the delivery of the pedagogical text allow for moments of reflection?
42. Does the teacher exploit the interplay between the professorial, or functional, role and the person who emerges from behind the professorial "mask"?
43. Does the teacher display a variety of moods (ironic, sincere...)?
44. Is there a place for humour, either *explicit* or *implicit*?
45. Is the teacher aware of the mood of the classes?
46. Is the pedagogical tone adapted to the prevailing mood in a class?
47. Is the pedagogical tone adapted to the content of the class?

The Delivery of the Script

48. Is the teacher aware of the function and importance of *non-verbal behaviour*?
49. Is the teacher prepared to use *affective behaviour* to positive advantage (moods, levels of energy...)?
50. Is the teacher prepared to exploit, in a judicious manner, *affective memory* (experience) in the classroom?
51. Does the teacher's voice vary in tone, volume, and speed?
52. Is voice projection appropriate to the teaching space?
53. Does the voice underscore major and minor themes?
54. Does the voice exploit expressive devices such as irony?
55. Does the teacher maximize pleasant features of the voice?
56. Is there eye contact (or audience contact in larger classes)?
57. Does the teacher exploit facial expression?
58. Is physical movement neither static nor frantic?
59. Does the teacher exploit energy levels so that they underscore the pedagogical script?
60. Is gesture effective (expressive yet natural)?
61. Does the teacher make the best possible use of distance (neither too formal nor too intimate, conveying a desire to communicate)?

Questions

Importance Assessment
(1-5) (1-5)

62. Do the mechanisms of expression seem to be 'in sync' with one another? (Is the voice exaggerated? Is gesture misplaced? Is physical movement nervous? static?)
63. Does the teacher's non-verbal behaviour convey, in general, a desire to communicate?
64. Does the teacher pay attention to entrances and exits?
65. Is the entrance energetic and engaging? Does it happen on time?
66. Can the students expect a clear and timely closure?
67. Does the teacher do everything possible to promote a good learning ambiance?
68. Is the learning space uncluttered and free of unwelcome distractions?
69. Are the teacher's "props" adequate without being excessive?
70. Are the technical facilities adequate and appropriate?
71. Does the teacher have good control of the technical facilities?
72. Is the teacher comfortable with the teaching style which has evolved?
73. Does the teacher consider ways to improve the teaching style?
74. Has the teacher experimented with change, in various respects?

Rhythm in Context

75. Does the teacher coordinate course and classroom activities with the rhythm of activity within the institution?
76. Does the teacher coordinate course and classroom rhythm with those of students' other courses?
77. Does the teacher coordinate, or at least compare, pedagogical approaches with those of other teachers in the same programme or institution?
78. Does the teacher encourage students to consider that colleagues' approaches might complement each other, contributing to the enrichment of education?
79. Does the teacher make some effort to convey a vision of education that forms an implicit or explicit pedagogical discourse?
80. Does the teacher show how the vision of education justifies programme objectives?
81. Does the teacher show how the vision of education supports institutional goals (those of the liberal college, the community college, the research institution...)?
82. Does the teacher show how the vision of education supports other endeavours (regional or national policy, examination of current issues, promotion of humane values...)?
83. FORMULATE OTHER QUESTIONS which are, in your view, relevant to the rhythms of teaching, perhaps particularly in your subject area or teaching conditions.

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