Decoding Across the Disciplines at Mount Royal University

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The “Decoding the Disciplines” Cycle

1. What is a bottleneck to learning in this class, a place where many students consistently fail to master crucial material?

2. What do specialists do so they get past this bottleneck?

3. How can I explicitly model these operations for students?

4. How can I give my students an opportunity to practice and get feedback on each of these operations?

5. How can I motivate students and address the affective side of learning?

6. How can I tell whether students have mastered these operations by the end of the process?

7. How can I share what I have learned with others?

Informing Practice

1. Informing the decoding interview process

2. Curriculum and pedagogical applications at Mount Royal University
Informing the Decoding interview process

- Faculty Learning Community
  - Interviews with 7 faculty members from a variety of disciplines
  - Transcripts analyzed
    - inductively; and
    - from hermeneutic,
    - phenomenological (embodiment), and
    - narrative identity lenses
The Bottlenecks

- Cognitive (thinking processes): 4
  - Engineering, nursing/biology, journalism, theatre

- Epistemological (nature of knowledge): 1
  - Journalism

- Ontological (being and becoming): 2
  - Nursing
Inductive Analysis: Common themes

- 7 common themes identified
- ways of thinking
  - deconstructing/reconstructing; recognizing patterns
- ways of practicing
  - valuing provisionality; expanding thinking; attending to the world; taking agency
- ways of being
  - being ethical/authentic
Theme: Attentiveness to the world

participants spoke about a natural curiosity and attentiveness to their environments
Theme: Attentiveness to the world

“One of the questions I ask myself all the time is, ‘What else do I want to know about this patient? What else will help me take care of him?’… A lot of it is being observant… I think that has really helped me in terms of understanding and gathering all the information that I need.”

-Louisa, nursing
Theme: Attentiveness to the world

“I am keenly conscious of how some structures that are used in journalism come across as very authoritative, and thus reinforce whatever truth they are delivering, and I am conscious of voice in journalism... I am very conscious of the machinery and the process by which the journalism is produced and that is where a true critique of any piece of writing has to start, with an understanding of the conditions of production of it.”

-Juan Carlos, journalism
Theme: Attentiveness to the world

“...If they decide to work in acute care and when they keep seeing the same person or the same issues again and again... they will ask what are we doing in the environment that predisposes people for not being successful? They will think ‘Back it up, back it up’ and look upstream and say ‘How did this happen?’”

-Wendy, nursing
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Considerations for our teaching

- how can we help students integrate knowing, practicing, and being?
- do we decontextualize knowledge from the practice to which it relates?
- do we prioritize content and ‘efficiency’ over deep understanding?
- do we focus on epistemology at the expense of ontology?
Application - CSL

- multidisciplinary faculty self-study
- data: decoding interviews, individual reflections on the interview; individual and group reflections on the self-study process
- findings: Decoding interview played a key role in generating learning and in fostering a climate of trust; multidisciplinary nature of our group was important

Application – Athletic Therapy

- program-wide curriculum project; moving from a deductive model to a ‘clinical presentation model’

- findings:
  - Decoding interviews played an important role in building a community of practice
  - Decoding interviews helped some participants realize that the bottleneck for students was something other than what they originally thought it was
Thank you!

For reference list or more information about this presentation, please contact jmyoung@mtroyal.ca