

Themed Conversation – Making Teaching Practice Public (Open Classroom Week Debrief)

March 13, 2015 - 12:00 to 1:00pm

Questions posed during themed conversation:

1. What was your most useful learning gained from participating in Open Classroom Week?
2. What surprised you about Open Classroom Week, as an instructor or observer?
3. What was it like to be a student again?
4. What recommendations would you make for future iterations of Open Classroom Week?

Useful:

- Observing classes across disciplines
- Observing different uses of tech - to do yourself, and to coach people to do as well
- Helping to support all kinds of teaching practice
- Intentional thought as an instructor about how teaching practice looks
- Conversations are really important - observers and instructors are talking about small changes in the classroom
- Informing other initiatives happening in faculties and programs
- Seeing your teaching through someone else's eyes
- Good to be in a student's perspective

What surprised you about your experience?

- Had to steel myself to do things as I normally would - resisting the urge to showcase techniques
- Observers got what they got
- Strategies for different sized classes were surprising - surprised to see how engaged students were in a large classroom; what it's like to work the room in a big class
- Challenged assumptions about what can or cannot be done in different sized classes
- Surprised at how forthcoming students were, and can be - instructor elicited stories that were unexpected
- Different limits to different kinds of classes... raised questions about the kinds of participation you can encourage in different class sizes
- The level of risk experienced (instructor). Teaching is a private practice because we get used to operating at a consistent level of risk. When we open the classroom, it's a different level of risk... this was a new experience and sensation

What was it like to be a student again?

- Got insight about how hard it is to concentrate for 75 minutes, and the kinds of strategies that you need to use in order to combat that
- Felt distracted by laptops all around
- How good it feels to be a learner in a class where someone is excited by teaching and learning

- Too shy to stop the class and get the concept... even as an instructor
 - Fear of appearing stupid or not knowledgeable enough
- Sympathy and empathy for students - who may not know how to be an effective student... take notes, etc. And, students are surrounded by distractions...
- Students were using innovative learning practices - such as embedding pictures of notes, etc.
- Less students than expected were distracted with technology
- Students who were using technology were using it quietly, and not disrupting the flow of instruction
- Made instructors mindful of patterns and cues that are used in order to signal students to pay attention - all instructors have their own unconscious habits
- Students are really conscious about when to pay attention and when not to
- Deep interest in subject matter reads from the instructors

Questions and recommendations

- Could there be more offerings throughout the term?
- Could we open classroom classes at different time of year? Not at midterm or end of year... when students are stressed
 - Before reading break?
 - Opening the very first class?
- Instructor - driven opening in terms of timing
- Opening the very first class?
- More balance between faculties - considering numbers of students and size of faculties
- Spreading it out might help encourage people to open their classes - it takes a lot of courage to open your class.
- Can all kinds of instructors open their classrooms? Can all instructors be encouraged to open their classrooms?
- Could there be an expectation for how people can interact after the observation? Set up standards for this... what is appropriate? What is welcome and not welcome... Make it clear that observers can talk to teachers after the observation.