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Moving Away from the Lecture as a Didactic Activity

It is often acknowledged that the lecture is one of the most ineffective teaching and learning methods available to the university teacher, yet it persists in higher education as the preferred teaching methodology. However, there are those who will claim that there is no place for the lecture in the university classroom. This might be unrealistic, when all things are considered. Despite the fact that lectures might be fraught with impediments to learning, they can be used sparingly but meaningfully in our courses. For this to occur, the content must be structured and delivered in a way that allows the student to connect with it powerfully as it is being taught.

The decision concerning when to use the lecture might be one of the questions that we must answer. We often point out that teaching methodologies should be appropriately selected and we must determine the best method to get specific content across and to effectively cause learning. Hence Weimer (2014) questions are important:

Should the decision of whether to lecture be influenced by what we are teaching in class that day? Are some kinds of content better explained by the teacher than discovered by the students? Is it complex content that you know from previous experience often causes students to struggle? Can the teacher's explanation lay the foundation, set the parameters, or provide the context so that students can start dealing with content from a place that expedites understanding? Is a lecture the best way to clarify what students find confusing?

There is clear evidence that students attention spans vary in lectures (Wilson & Korn, 2007). We also know that attention spans can be extended by strategies that make the content more meaningful or those that help with the encoding of

content such as note taking. Although lectures are certainly less useful in seeking to teach critical thinking skills or behavioural skills, or changing attitudes, they have a place especially when large amounts of information need to be communicated. Accordingly, when we use lectures, certainly if we don't want them to be mere didactic activities we should try to make them as learning-centred as possible. This is possible by, for instance pre-lecture activities (Cerbin 2018). There is a place for determining what students need to know to understand the course content to be disseminated and discussed in the lecture. It is possible to provide appropriate assignments associated with the kinds of understandings that the lecture is seeking to develop. Hence Cerbin proposed quizzes, the use of reading material to complete a matrix or material that involves students in analysis of cases, scenarios and data sets. This approach recognises that learning is improved by way of the lecture by what a student does before the lecture, what is done during the lecture and what happens after the lecture.

In moving away from this notion of the didactic lecture, use of the available technologies to make the session more interactive is also important. One good technology would be the student response system so that the lecture becomes more interactive. In this way questions are posed during the lecture, individual responses are received and this might lead to further conversation in pairs or other small group formations. In this way we can move away from the lecture as a didactic activity (Dalrymple & Eaglesfield, 2013).

Use of other interactive activities is also recommended since we want to get our students active and engaged. There is no doubt that it will be harder to get interaction going among 200 than 40 students but interactive lectures are certainly preferred. The following ten ideas are offered to you as you seek to make your lectures more interactive and less didactic:

Cont. on page 3

Inside this Issue

PAGE 1 & 3

Moving Away from the
Lecture as a Didactic
Activity

PAGE 2

CETL Annual Meeting

PAGE 3

Activities at the
CETL

PAGE 3 & 4

Other Activities at the
CETL

- Blended Learning
- Innovative Assessment
- Opportunities for Faculty development at the Mona Campus
- Using Rubrics in Classroom Assessment

PAGE 3 & 4

Mini Lectures

CETLs Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the CETLs on the Campuses of the UWI was held at the Mona Campus, January 30- February 1, 2019. Each year, the CETL convenes an annual meeting of all its faculty developers and the equivalent officers in the Open Campus. These meetings bring together the heads of the CETLs on all the three land campuses of the UWI and the equivalent leaders of teaching and learning in various departments of the Open Campus. This year the meeting provided an opportunity for the review of the operations of the CETL, reflection on the accomplishments and planning for the advancement of teaching and learning in the institution.

This year, all three heads of the CETLs were present. These heads were Dr Margo Burns, Director, CETL, St. Augustine, Dr Sylvia Henry, Officer-in-Charge, CETL, Cave Hill and Dr Mervin Chisholm, Manager/Coordinator, CETL, Mona Campus. There was also a team from the Open Campus lead by Dr Florence Williams, Online and Distance Learning Instructional Specialist, Academic Programming and Delivery Division. Other members of the team were Mrs Vivienne Harding, Programme Coordinator, Programme Planning Department, Dr Yasmeen Yusuf-Khalil, Head of Programme Delivery Department, Academic Programming and Delivery Division, Mrs Sharon Gilzene, Curriculum Development Specialist, Academic Programming and Delivery Division and Mrs Elizabeth Sinclair, Programme Manager, Academic Programming and Delivery Division.

There were also some specially invited guests. These guests were Dr Claudette Coote-Thompson, Curriculum Development Specialist, Faculty of Sport, Mona Campus, Mrs Michelle Stewart-McKoy, Faculty Associate, CETL Mona Campus and Dr Beryl Allen (retiree), Former Head, IDU, UWI Mona Campus. The Deputy Principal of the Mona Campus, Professor Ian Boxill was a specially invited guest and he brought greetings on the first day of the meeting.

Several faculty developers and staff members of the CETL working at Cave Hill and the St. Augustine campuses were unable to join in person but joined the meeting via the web using Blackboard Collaborate or Zoom. We were also joined by other staff members of the Open Campus from various locations across the Caribbean. Those joining using web based technologies included Ms. Ariane Franklin, Secretary, CETL, Cave Hill Campus, Mr Troy Carrington, Faculty Development Facilitator, e-Learning and Instructional Technology, CETL, Cave Hill Campus, Mrs Andrea Marshall, Faculty Development Facilitator, Curriculum and Instruction, CETL, Cave Hill Campus, Mr Kevin Ramsoobhag, Learning Support Supervisor, Academic Programming and Delivery Division, Open Campus and Mr Justin Zephyrine, e-learning Support Specialist, CETL, St Augustine Campus.

Five keynote speakers were invited and made presentations. These were Professor Densil Williams, Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic-Industry Partnerships and Planning, UWI, Professor Alan Cobley, Pro Vice Chancellor, Board for Undergraduate Studies, UWI, Dr Leith Dunn, Senior Lecturer/ Head of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, UWI, Mona Unit, Dr Joseph Powell, Director/General Manager, UWI Press and Dr Tasha Souza, Associate Director for the Center for Teaching and Learning and Professor of Communications at Boise State University, Boise, Idaho, USA.

Highlights of the meeting included the reports of the CETLs and the Open Campus. A keynote presentation on the strategic development plan of the UWI was given by Professor Densil Williams, entitled Strategy in Action. The major concern of the address was the UWI's "Triple A" Strategic Plan. Another key note address was offered by the PVC, Board of Undergraduate Studies on teaching and learning at UWI. Then, the need for gender mainstreaming in the work of the CETL was explored through a keynote address and plenary session led by Dr Leith Dunn. Dr Joseph Powell of the UWI press offered a keynote address on publishing through the UWI Press. The final keynote address was offered by guest facilitator, faculty developer, Dr Tasha Souza who led the faculty development webinar on "Sustaining Faculty Development."

Activities at the CETL



Members of faculty of the Department of History and Archaeology attending a workshop on Transitioning to Blended Learning on Thursday January 17, 2019. The workshop was led by Mrs Michelle Stewart-McKoy (standing), Faculty Associate in Teaching Using 21st Century Technologies of the CETL. At the far right is Dr Enrique Okenve, Acting Head of the Department.

Update on the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL)

Throughout this semester, the majority of the time of the CETL was focused on the delivery of the CUTL sessions. Two cohorts were involved in these sessions, Cohorts 8 and 9. The following face-to-face and online sessions were held:

CUTL5104: January 14-18, 2019, Online Sessions (Cohort 9) and other finalising students.

CUTL5106: January 7, 2019 and Online sessions (Cohort 9)

CUTL 5207: Online Sessions (Cohort 8)

There were also student teaching and those benefited from classroom observations. Further ongoing preparation and review of lesson plans called for ongoing coaching engagements.

This semester the CETL responded to the requests of some academic departments and a faculty for educational/faculty development sessions. These departments included History and Archaeology, Mona School of Business and Management (MSBM), the Department of Medicine and the Faculty of Engineering.

Blended Learning

The Department of History and Archaeology indicated that they were planning to transition to blended learning in some of their programmes. Accordingly, The CETL was invited to conduct a workshop with interested faculty members to prepare them to make the transition to the blended learning teaching and learning arrangements. This was to be followed –up with other workshops.

Blended Learning is an approach to facilitating learning that combines face-to-face (F2F) classroom learning and teaching activities with computer-mediated learning and teaching strategies. The result of this arrangement is an integrated approach to learning and teaching. In some cases, F2F meetings are reduced since there is an online component to the course being offered. Oftentimes, the terms “blended learning,” “hybrid” and “mixed mode” are used interchangeably.

The major goal of blended learning is to promote the most effective and efficient learning and teaching arrangement by combining the delivery approaches. Hence, in the classroom session, students can be supported to learn content by engaging in interactive engagements. Computer-mediated learning and teaching allows for the online component or computer –mediated segment of a course to provide multimedia opportunities for learning. It is possible to include interactive technologies such as blogs, wikis, social media, video/audio conferencing, discussion forums, lecture capturing, iPads or mobile technologies in the blended learning arrangement.

Innovative Assessment

A workshop was held to facilitate the professional development of lecturers of the MSBM on the use of innovative assessment techniques and best practices in providing feedback to students. This was a particularly challenging faculty development activity since it had to be held on a Saturday (January 19, 2019) to enable adjunct faculty members to attend.

Opportunities for Faculty development at the Mona Campus

A special seminar on opportunities for educational/faculty development at the UWI Mona campus was designed and held for the Department of Medicine on Monday, February 11, from 8:30 am to 10:00am. The Department of Medicine is housed on the campus of the University Hospital and the seminar was held in their seminar room in the Department. The response was good and faculty member's expressed interest in further opportunities particular geared towards clinical faculty since they were generally consultants at the UWI hospital and were minimally involved in the overall activities of the campus.

Using Rubrics in Classroom Assessment

The CETL partnered with the Faculty of Engineering to host a workshop this semester (Semester 2) the last in a series of workshops to assist them with their preparations for their accreditation. They had sought and were preparing for the

Cont. on page 4

1. Include individual, pairs and small group activities, for instance the classroom assessment technique (CATS) “Think, pair, share” in which you pose a short question or a problem and get students to think individually, share with a partner and then with the group.
2. Provide a problem or some more involved task and get students to work through the problem or discuss the situation in groups
3. Ask several questions in the lecture, seek responses by individual show of hands. Make sure you allow enough wait time before seeking the answers from the students. You might also want to invite students to discuss their responses in groups of two or three and then take a selection of the considered responses.
4. Create short writing exercises and assign them to students; for example, ask students to write down a key learning point so far and share this with a partner.
5. Make use of brainstorming exercises, for example, ask students to recall and write a list of important terms, concepts and ideas from the material covered.
6. Introduce short quizzes and tests.
7. Engage them in doing calculations, working through a problem or a scenario.
8. Get students working on the whiteboard by inviting them to show how they would work a problem or it might be that you want them to fill in blanks, write up key points, questions or answers.
9. Utilise the one minute paper or the one sentence summary (CATS).
10. Have your students do the activity called the muddiest point by asking them to write about the muddiest point of the lecture on a sheet of paper and then you can collect them for review and treatment in the next class.

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Mini Lectures

The challenge to create our own content in the Caribbean for online and blended learning is one that we ought to meet head-on. Unfortunately, we are not really content creators, we are content consumers. However, the task of creating digital lecture materials is not easy and in fact it is not recommended that we create a lecture with an instructor giving an address for 50-60 minutes to a group of students in a classroom. The question of interest in this lecture and whether or not it would be watched looms large. Recorded traditional classroom

Cont. on page 4

Mini Lectures

lectures are not known to increase student learning. Short recorded classroom lectures of 5 or so minutes might be the way to go if we want to create lectures and upload them to a learning management system (LMS) or use them in some other way. Creating short lecture with a Caribbean personality offering the information in lecture format might be one of the approaches that we might use to Caribbeanize teaching and learning in higher education. Of course, where possible, this lecture should use Caribbean examples and the lecturer ought to embrace the notion of indigenising pedagogy. These lectures provide students with information that is useful for their courses and offer many advantages. These include the possibility for students to review these on demand, stopping them and relaying them several times.

These mini lectures in the form of videos may be provided to ensure that the essential content that students need are made available. This would be content that would be traditionally covered in classes. Further, quizzes might be used to determine as best as possible the level of understanding that students have developed from the previous class and the assigned reading etc. This will allow the class time to be spent doing activities that are designed to illuminate and clarify the most difficult concepts.

Many faculty members at universities in various localities have used available software to create videos including camtasia. They try to cover material in these videos that used to be covered in the classroom.

The recording of these mini videos might be facilitated in a multimedia recording room for the best results. Typically, this room will have sound-proof walls, a computer with the required software and a studio quality microphone.

In making a recording, it is best to organise the material in logical groupings that is easily recorded in short segments. If in the traditional lecture, five major learning objectives were to be covered, then five recording might be the approach taken. If the content for the mini- lecture is really lengthy, additional recordings might be required. In any event, the challenge is to keep viewing time short. There are times when the viewing time might be 10 or even 15 minutes but this should be an anomaly and not the rule.

Most technical personnel would advise lecturers to develop a script or outline of the content. Depending on the software being

used, the PowerPoint slides might be useful. In fact if Camtasi is being used, PowerPoint can be imported into it.

After editing, the recorded mini lectures are produced as MP4 files. This will allow them to be played on Mac, PC and most mobile devices. This is crucial since you want the students to view the videos from various point-of –access so the flexibility in accessing the video is enhanced by creating them as MP4 files.

Other Activities at the CETL

Using Rubrics in Classroom Assessment

cont'd from page 3

Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) accreditation processes including a campus visit of the accreditors. This semester the focus was on the development of use of rubrics in assessment.

Rubrics are a way of explicitly stating the expectations for student performance. They may lead to a grade or be part of the grading process but they are more specific, detailed, and disaggregated than a grade. Rubrics provide a description of each level of performance as to what is expected.

Abet Fundamentals Workbook, 2018

Essentially a rubric is a scoring or grading tool used to measure learning performance and learning across a set of criteria and objectives. Rubrics usually vary from discipline to discipline, even in the same course there can be different types of rubrics. However, there are some characteristics that are generally present in a rubric. These are as follows: i) dimensions/criteria ii) descriptors, and; iii) scale/level of performance.

The dimensions/criteria is a distinct section on the rubric that allows for scrutiny of the aspects of the performance or the measuring of the performance. For its part, the descriptor, provides an indication of the characteristics that are associated with each dimension. With the scale/level of performance, there is the provision for the rating of one's performance and this is usually done based on level of mastery of each criterion that is achieved by the student.

Figure 1: Example of Rubrics (Accessed from Rogers, 2010)

| Communication Skills | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| | Unsatisfactory 1 | Developing 2 | Satisfactory 3 | Exemplary 4 |
| Performance criteria | | | | |
| Performance criteria | | | | |
| Performance criteria | | | | |
| Performance criteria | | | | |

Scales (indicated by a bracket spanning columns 2, 3, and 4)

Dimensions (indicated by a bracket spanning rows 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Descriptors (indicated by a bracket spanning the entire table content)