

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning



Special points of interest:

- The *Teaching Tips Newsletter* is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/>) as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

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Assessment for Learning

You might have heard educators make mention of formative assessment or on-going assessment. We do it all the time in our classrooms. It is important to assess our students for learning and use the feedback they provide to structure the teaching to ensure that learning is really taking place. The critical incident questionnaire (CIQ) developed by Stephen Brookfield is one instrument that you might want to add to your classroom toolkit as you engage in formative assessment or assessment for learning. It can be used in multiple ways, for instance to determine how well your students are responding to a new teaching strategy or learning aspects of the content. Here is the instrument:

The CIQ

Please take about five minutes to respond to the questions below about this week's class. Don't put your name on the form - your responses are anonymous. If nothing comes to mind for any of the questions just leave the space blank. At the next class we will share the group's responses with all of you. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help us make the class more responsive to your concerns.

1. At what moment in class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in class this week were you most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took this week did you find most affirming or helpful?
4. What action that anyone took this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?

5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be about your own reactions to what went on, something that someone did, or any thing else that occurs).

Source: Brookfield, Stephen. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

When the CIQ was developed it consisted of five questions with space in between for student responses. It was handed out as a single sheet of paper with a carbon copy. Students were asked to fill it in during the last five minutes of the class and return it anonymously to the teacher. The questions were so worded inviting students to make specific observations they had about the class. In fact, the questions were designed to elicit concrete comments about how students were experiencing the class, provide insights about what they valued the most and what they thought they needed that was not being provided in the class.

After submission, the CIQ was read by the teacher. One approach was to look for common themes indicating problems or confusions. At the next class, a quick summary of the responses would be provided to the class by the teacher and any other action that might be deemed necessary. Of course, changes made to the course would be connected to the feedback provided by students if this was indeed the case. This would ensure that the learners knew that their responses were read and taken seriously and also that the process was transparent. Providing feedback to the students also helped to promote trust and encourage ongoing self reflection. In these days of advanced technology, the CIQ can be done anonymously online. It might be inserted in a learning management system and responses can be sent anonymously to the facilitator of learning.

A Teaching Gem on the Web: Google Docs



Several tools are available on the web to help you transform teaching and learning in the university classroom to become more learning centred and collaborative. However, with so many technological tools available, one must approach their use with thorough-going care because we could easily become overwhelmed with the choices or we might make selections that are not good for the university level classroom.

Google Apps: Google Forms, Google Calendar, Google Docs, Google Sites

Google Docs is fast becoming one of the suite of important web tools to facilitate group work. If you are interested in having your students write a paper, or work collaboratively to produce a paper, then Google Docs might be pressed into service. In fact, Google Docs can be used to organize the contributions of multiple students in much of the same way that a wiki might be used. There are several different tools included in Google Docs. These are a word processor, a spreadsheet, presentation software, a form/survey generator capable of depositing data directly into the spread sheet and a drawing tool. Google Docs enable you, the teacher to create a number of documents and these can then be shared with your class. It works in this way, a document is created and added to the collection and it is in turned shared with all members of the group. The special web 2.0 features of Google Docs allow students working on a document or presentation to edit simultaneously.

They can also use a chat window on one side of the screen to talk about what they are doing. If your students need to work asynchronously, they can leave comments for one another in a Facebook style threaded display. Changes to the document can be tracked; hence you are able to keep abreast of who did what and when it was done. It will also allow you to “roll back” to a previous version.

Students can use Google docs in numerous ways. The forms can be used to create surveys which can then be deposited into the spreadsheet. It can also be used to get learners to collaborate with homework and other assignments. With Google Docs, collaborative writing projects can become a reality. It allows students to work together around their busy schedules, it really supports peer negotiation and creates greater opportunities for peer help and peer tutoring.



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which features our monthly *Teaching Tips*,
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