Tagg – The Learning Paradigm College

Part IV Selections - Reading Synopsis

A Design for learning – we need to see the work of colleges as they affect the whole experience of the learner

Chapter 10: The Cognitive Economy of the Learning Paradigm College

High volition (doing what one wants to be doing) on the part of students, along with high attention to the task at hand is the goal for our classrooms.

- Perhaps the closest model to this in current school settings is seen in extracurricular activities
- The idea that the activity is not directly tied to a “curriculum” can be part of the strength in achieving this state
- Creating conditions for high volition and high attention can create good learners

Producing a hot cognitive economy hinges on alignment of the characteristics of that economy:

- Students are supported in pursuing their own goals (with some direction)
- Students are engaged in frequent performances (NOT done simply for their own sake)
- Students receive frequent feedback (but NOT in the form of trivial grading)
- Students are engaged in learning for the long term (with support to help them persist)
- Students are involved in stable communities of practice (based on intrinsic motivation)

The challenge of creating a hot cognitive economy moves institutions into process frontiers (situations based on new activities that require substantial modification to the way things are done).

Note: this challenge is not fundamentally different for research vs liberal arts or community colleges

Chapter 12: A Learning Paradigm College Requires Frequent, Continual, Connected, and Authentic Student Performances

Learning Paradigm colleges operate around activities. Like with extracurricular activities, learning activities in a college should be structures to facilitate, assess, refine, and display student performances. These activities have five characteristics:

- Tasks completed are publicly visible and meaningful (we are talking about performances here, not exercises or drills)
- Student performances are
  - authentic (the performance has value and consequences outside the documentation of the learner’s competence because of their practical, real-world context and purpose)
  - frequent (this increases time on task: time spent doing the work of learning)
continual (learning, and the performances surrounding it, should not be episodic)
connected (this means interdisciplinary and integrated rather than narrow or isolated)

Why student performances are important

- Performing activities requiring skill is the only way to master these skills. The skills become tacit knowledge that can’t easily be represented in any declarative way (example: riding a bike, playing an instrument).
- Performing activities integrates knowledge and allows its transfer to new applications. Performance integrates knowing and doing into a general framework of understanding such that you can have “a conversation with the materials of a situation”.
- Performing activities naturally helps us realize intrinsic goals – performance is the medium for doing what we choose rather than what we must.

In an active curriculum, activities are centered around the character and purpose of the performance rather than the subject matter. Examples of pedagogical approaches that achieve this are: problem-based learning, collaborative learning, service learning, and undergraduate research.

Example: Alverno College Performance-based curriculum
Example: Chandler-Gilbert Community College experiential courses
Example: University of Michigan student research activity
Example: University of Delaware discovery in the classroom

PROCESS FRONTIER FOR THIS CHAPTER: ACTIVITY

Chapter 13: A Learning Paradigm College Provides Consistent, Continual, Interactive Feedback to Students

Assessment is often defined as evaluation and also as feedback, but these are very different in purpose.

- Evaluation – information stating or confirming a judgement on a performance or person
- Feedback – information illustrating the effect of a performance in light of standards or goals such that it can be used to improve a future performance

Feedback stems from the learner’s beliefs or perceptions, while evaluation stems from other people’s beliefs or perceptions.

Feedback is dynamic and ongoing, while evaluation is final and occurs at mileposts.
Feedback has several key characteristics:

- It serves as road signs helping the learner navigate where they are going
- It is conversational in tone as it involves an ongoing dialogue
- It should be consistent across the curriculum
- It should be continual and connected
- It should be interactive
- It offers opportunity for reevaluation

Example: King’s College good mapping via deliberate learning plans

Example: Inver Hills identification of essential skills

Example: California State University at Monterey Bay’s road signs

PROCESS FRONTIER FOR THIS CHAPTER: INFORMATION
Discussion Prompts:

- What elements of a hot cognitive economy would you like to work to generate in your classroom (or what elements do you already use)? How are this achieved?

Grass roots really effective but do we have the chance to really improve large structures?

What can you tell faculty to do?

Why don’t they value these ideas? Lack of experience?

GT – seems to have recent focus on arts, alternative pedagogy, etc. – perhaps just due to provost?

Getting out rather than graduate – is this a generational thing with newer students?

Colin P – college from UK talked about life mapping, pursuing your own goals, for your whole 4 years (and university has sign up, etc. for constant reminders)

GT advising – professional vs. faculty advisors can help here, but we don’t have life mapping. BIOL has required visits and then use draft questionnaires to use with the student that addresses issues other than just their class list.

LMC – Rebecca Burnett – lots of feedback with few grades results in students up in arms because they don’t know where they stand in terms of grades. But feedback and evaluations should follow the same criteria. So are students suffering from issues of trust? Is culture not well established? How about self-assessments? Student give their own grades and then revise.

Dave L – Students choose course not part of curriculum, doesn’t help graduate w/ exception of one’s department now requiring it. Also, students are in this course with learning goals for the long term.

- What can we do to foster a performance-based learning environment as suggested by Tagg?
  What might some pitfalls be?

Won’t content mastery go down with more performance-based activity time? Perhaps the question is coverage versus mastery? How does the flipped classroom impact this?

Jennifer’s bee project has huge numbers of volunteers.

Connection between skills between Victorian literature writing versus lab report. How do we make these connections? The professor can do it by asking students to explicitly make the connections and ask student why it’s important or how it fits their goals.

LMC has info on their website about help to integrate writing in other courses. This authentic writing can help foster performance-based environments.
Could we have a set of “skill centers” like the communication lab to foster universal skillsets needed in all majors?

- What can we do to foster a feedback-based learning environment as suggested by Tagg? What might some pitfalls be?

Time to do quality feedback must be considered too.

Get a stack of work a foot tall, how good can summary be if we need it by tomorrow?

Have students read two items: a 1\textsuperscript{st} draft and a 4\textsuperscript{th} draft of a document by the same author. Then compare the two without knowing this at first and explain which is better and why.

Communication Lab – help for students is not a grade but communication lab is a feedback resource.