The “pedagogy of discomfort” as an approach to support curriculum development for inclusive education

Colloquium on Hopeful Pedagogies
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The essential dilemma

“How was one to break through all these borders? ‘Suture’, I think. Perhaps ‘suture’ is the word that can wash this world. Carefully, to stitch, to weave, this side to that side, so that border becomes a heart-hammered seam.”

Institutions and spaces may be new forms of …
Initial objectives

To bring fourth year social work, psychology and occupational therapy students from two universities together, in which they learn, across boundaries of institution, race, class and discipline, about community, self and identity.
Our model: “pedagogy of discomfort”

“cognitive dissonance... emotional fire inside me cannot be contained”. (SU)
A ‘structured’ learning experience

- Blended: on-line learning and face to face
- Blended: experiential and theoretical
- Use of participatory learning and action
- Use of groups of six to facilitate dialogue
“Draw the map of your community, showing services, ..., use beans to show areas where there are problems requiring attention”
Structured opportunities for learning
Guest lectures: Remix Theatre Company
Tell me your race then I will give you our identity

Guest lectures: local artist: Bernie Searle
Welcome to our experience of the Community, Self and Identity course: Through our definitions, remaining questions and new learnt importance of these terms, for our professional lives; we hope that you will learn as much as we did!

**GROUP N: Transcending Boundaries!**

**Conclusion**

In a multi-dimensional society, it is important to embrace that people, even professionals, are individuals and have different ideas about life, but that everyone has an unique and important contribution to make. (This is the main lesson we learned from being a part of this programme). It does not mean that we cannot have our own opinion, the importance is accepting our own identities while acknowledging and respecting others. Like the puzzle, every piece is a different colour, but together it forms a whole. All the pieces have one purpose, to form a puzzle. All of us differ, but we all share the same goal – to help people in need.
Outcome for students

“Would you recommend repeating the idea of learning with students from another university?”
84 – yes; 1 – no.

“Would you recommend repeating the idea of learning with students from another discipline?”
83 – yes; 1 – no.

“Would you recommend using a mix of workshops and electronic communication?”
77 – yes; 7 – no; 2 – maybe.
Multiple lessons learnt

• What students were able to learn, and how much, about identity, difference, etc
• What factors facilitated this learning:
  – Pedagogic
  – Socio-cultural
• Negotiating learning
  – Strategies students used
• What theories were useful to us
Theories we drew upon

- Contact hypothesis and refutations (Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux)
- SA literature on difference, international literature
- Human capabilities (Sen, Nussbaum, Walker)
- Pedagogy of discomfort (Boler and Zembylas)
- Critical race theory (various)
- Participatory learning and action (Chambers)
- Reflexivity – various
- Community of practice/community of enquiry (Wenger)
The teacher is implicated within the social and pedagogical narrative, not some empowered educator who has figured out the problems of an unequal world and stands to dispense this wisdom to receiving students. ... the teachers are themselves carriers of troubled knowledge, and this has serious implications for critical education.

Jonathan Jansen (2009)
*Knowledge in the Blood; Confronting Race and the Apartheid Past.*
Cape Town: UCT Press
Team process

Critical friends
Action research
2005 - 2006
Planning
Fundraising
2006 – 2008
Implementation
Reflection
2009 - 2010
Planning
New phase
Team Process: Writing for learning


“It was a very intense and emotional experience for all of the participants, leaving many feeling vulnerable and exposed.”
On reflection

Students
Enjoyed traversing different spaces
Experienced process as difficult
Small number crossed the threshold
Need to work towards a goal

Success factors for the team
Reflexivity
Team work, commitment, investment
Hard work
Successful fundraisers
Interdisciplinarity