

FROM PIANISSIMO TO FORTE: TEACHING IN HIGHER ED

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REGRESSION

I
never
thought
I'd get this chance.
Never imagined I'd play the leading note.
Never imagined I'd be able to teach my passion.
Not in longing dreams.
I ask advice from
Faculty—
Experts in education.
How do you teach in higher ed?
What strategies work for you? What's different?
How do you engage and incite students' passion for learning?
They say, "don't complicate things,"
teach the standards,
use power points,
lectures,
quizzes,
assign
papers to write
and maybe a project or two.
So, I trust the advice and voice of experience.
I plan accordingly and try to excite and create a rhythm
for learning in the "traditional" sense. I can't
do this. It doesn't work. I am not
a Systematic Deliverer
of information.
What can
I do?

PROGRESSION

It's
my job,
my passion,
to encourage personal
growth & empower students to learn.¹
And change things up—methods of instruction,
my responsibility requires a sophisticated, practical wisdom
a flexible, reflective practice informed by a
multidimensional critical awareness.²
Soulful understanding tangos
with euphonious
introspection,

resonating
 revelations, and
 this important insight will
 be a central theme, as I nurture
 authentic voice and
 responsible
 agency.³

ANALYSIS

A
 course
 grounded in 3S⁴ pedagogy
 will allow for the cultivation of
 democratic Self and Social understandings.⁵
 The notes—the low ones and the high ones, today,
 I play them both... Or try to,
 but
 ubiquitous
 undulations of
 dissonance roll over me,
 looming like a doleful, depressive dirge.
 I try to keep from listening to the unspoken crescendo
 of disquietude. They want power points, lectures, quizzes, and papers to write.
 A comfortable and soothing lullaby
 of expected predictable
 Instruction ~
 so very UN-
 expected.
 My thoughts
 ride up and down,
 a raging roller coaster
 of wild hope and utter terror.
 Venturing into 3S pedagogy is not what they want.
 How do I encourage students to explore, engage, and dare to be creative in class?
 How do I teach while wrapping self and social understandings into content?
 Students long for a curriculum that's higher ed "typical."
 I know what I have to do now.
 It's time for change...
 A tempo change...
 Transposing
 the song
 into
 a rhythm
 of progressive,
 emancipatory pedagogy—to address
 the cultural and existential challenges of democratic living
 and to serve in a key hermeneutic role,
 to encourage and engage students
 in a supported journey of 3S
 understanding.

SYNTHESIS

I

strain to hear

faint stanzas of a new melody,

the next piece in our instructional composition.

Sweet sounds of discussion, harmonious intervals of happiness.

Everyone has a voice, encouraging, inspiring, engaging in professional leadership,
cultivating change and practical wisdom through “simplicity.”⁶

Resounding excitement! My pulse quickens.

Heart slamming, head spinning,

I’m so excited I feel

like I’m silly

in the

head.

The

Tempo

Quickens.

Lead learning.

Seeking change.

Inspiring, admiring

Keep reaching higher.

Take responsibility for everyone,

but allow their aspirations to be their own.

Focus on the job at hand—here, past, and future

Follow through—step forward, reach across

Anticipating, what will and may never

Work toward what you believe in—

Remember the human factor.

Treat others with respect.

Keep learning,

Encouraging

others

to

Learn,

Engage,

Empower,

Walk the talk,

Mentor, and Motivate.

Be mindful of the big things in life.

Foster, facilitate, and develop trustful relationships.

Provide a safe and supportive environment.

Listen, as the music swells into an

a cappella flash mob,

singularly unified,

servants

of the

democratic

ideas of society.⁷

Endnotes

¹Noddings (2013)

²Null (2017)

³Walker & Soltis (2009)

⁴A note about 3S pedagogy: 3S understanding is a shorthand notion referring to a balanced integration of subject matter understandings with democratic self and social understandings.

With an emphasis on producing tangible and concrete outcomes, time for more reflective inquiry into the problems of the day is not reinforced in many schools.... What we want is a curriculum for being and, more importantly, a curriculum for becoming.... Yes, we want students who are smart in subject matter, but we also want good people. Our world depends on it. (Henderson & Gornik, 2007, pp. 130, 136)

3S understanding involves moving instruction beyond simple subject matter to include an understanding of self and social understanding through reflective inquiry..

⁵Henderson et al. (2015)

⁶Henderson et al. (2015, pp. 165-166)

⁷Dewey's (1916) *Democracy and Education* as cited in Henderson et al. (2015, p. 171)

References

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