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**The Importance of Inter/Intra Subjectivity in Students'
Perceptions of Teacher Effectiveness: an Empathically
Intelligent Approach to Understanding.**

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Creative Dissent: Constructive Solutions.

Abstract:

Students' voices can reveal insights into the nature of effective teaching and signal the importance of inter-intra subjectivity in the dynamics of pedagogy. The study was designed to determine the match between new insights and the principles of empathic intelligence and students' embodied experiences of pedagogy. Secondary school students' voices, articulated through a particular role-play, provided data to reveal the degree of match between their experience and these principles. The study provides nuanced evidence to suggest that the relational and affective aspects of pedagogy are integral to learning and teaching effectiveness.

In this paper we argue that it is important for both students and their teachers to understand the interplay between inter/intra- subjective dynamics in classrooms. Consistent with an empathically intelligent understanding of pedagogy, we argue that students bring to bear in classrooms certain embodied understandings of what constitutes teacher effectiveness and the extent to which the teacher can positively influence and model good pedagogical practices. While only one part of this complex dynamic between teachers and students is explored in this paper, we will show how a group of students were encouraged to make overt their covert understandings of teacher effectiveness, drawn, we argue, from their embodied experiences as learners. Once such covert understandings are made overt, expressed or symbolised they are available for reflection and modulation.

This study had two purposes. One was to bring to consciousness, students' unconscious understandings of good teaching. The other purpose was to determine the fit between the principles of effective pedagogy outlined in the theory of empathic intelligence (Arnold, 2005) and those principles and practices perceived by a group of Year 11 students as effective.

Feeling and thinking.

One of the promising developments in science at the beginning of this new century is the increasing interest in the nature and function of human emotions. Previously, feelings have been regarded as unreliable indicators of mature human responsiveness, particularly in intellectual pursuits. However, once we become interested in the interplay between feelings and thought, we move into a potentially creative and dynamic space in which deep reflective thought is possible. Now that neural imaging and research on the development of consciousness have illustrated the interconnectedness of thought and emotion in the brain, the concept of rational thought is being re-conceptualised. The brain and mind research of Damasio (1994, 2000), LeDoux (1992), and others is helping us to understand better that the relationships between the cognitive and emotional parts of our brains are infinitely more complex than is generally realised. Students' responses in this study referenced both thoughts and feelings in relation to effective pedagogy, thereby demonstrating their awareness of the need for both.

Transformative learning.

Attitudes to human thinking and the nature of intellectual maturity are changing as they become increasingly influenced by scientific research into human consciousness (Damasio, 2003; LeDoux 1992; Schwartz 2002; Rose 1998). Furthermore, postmodern thinking about the nature of intelligence and the phenomena of human experience has stimulated debate about the best teaching methods for a humane and electronically wired world. It is now acknowledged that the best educative processes will match information-seeking with imaginative and open-ended outcomes. Such processes model and encourage mindful, *care*-ful participation. Education for the best and fullest human consciousness requires that we understand and respect the inner world of individuals, in which thought and feeling are complementary psychic processes. It is equally important to understand how individuals interact with others, and how they derive significance from such interactions. It is this theoretical position that informed the study reported here.

As educators in classrooms and lecture halls around the world face their students day after day, the students study the teachers' faces, listen to their voices, read their dress and body language for clues to the teachers' biographies and pre-dispositions. In doing so they are fine-tuning an expertise started in infancy of interpreting what the other really means, and determining whether it matters. The rich world of interpersonal life between humans and the equally rich intra-personal life enjoyed by those of a reflective or contemplative disposition, are the foundations for deep and meaningful learning. Such learning can shape and reflect complex understandings of the world, its shapes, patterns, order, irregularities, ambiguities and mysteries. Such deep learning, and the contexts which give rise to it, are often overlooked.

This study reveals that qualities of expertise, enthusiasm, capacity to engage and empathy (Arnold, 2005) enable transformative learning and its associated relational caring. Embedded in the students' responses here is a recognition and valuing of four intra-subjective qualities which are founded in intelligent caring and evidence attitudes and values which position individuals in mutually respectful relationships.

Defining empathic intelligence.

Empathic intelligence (Arnold, 2005) is a way of using various intelligences and sensitivities to engage effectively with others. Typically there will be an awareness of purpose and effect in these engagements, and a capacity to shift dynamics if necessary. Empathic intelligence is a sustained system of psychic, cognitive, affective, social and ethical functioning, derived from an ability to:

- differentiate self-states (both thoughts and feelings) from others' states through self awareness, reflection and applied imagination
- engage in reflective and analogic processing to understand dynamics
- mobilise a dynamic between thinking and feeling in self and others to enhance learning
- demonstrate enthusiasm, expertise and an ability to engage others
- work creatively, guided by observation, attunement and adaptive capacity
- demonstrate intelligent caring
- use mirroring and affirmation effectively
- commit to the well-being and development of self and others.

This definition describes a sophisticated system of psychic functioning developed through affective sensitivity, a habit of self-reflection, knowledge about the ways humans learn and process experiences, and certain philosophical assumptions about human values and human potential. In this definition, precursors to the development of full empathic intelligence are both affective, and cognitive. It reflects an educator's view of the world.

Description of the study.

This is a qualitative study of year eleven students (ages 16-17) from secondary schools who were invited to attend a Sydney university for a day to learn about university life. The students were selected by their schools, on the basis that they were high achievers and were likely to attend university after completion of the year twelve examinations. The twenty students had indicated a potential interest in teacher

education and so attended a two-hour session at the university. These potential future teachers came from a variety of government and non-government schools and the group consisted of seven boys and thirteen girls.

Previous research (Simons & Hughes, 1991) had indicated that merely touring students around the University and giving them a lecture may indeed be counter productive. Reflection on this suggested that a more empathic approach was needed to tap students' tacit understandings of effective pedagogy and provide an affective space (Boal, 1995) in which they could experience a positive relationship with the university milieu. The use of role-play has been found to be effective in providing a positive and rewarding experience of the tertiary sector for high school students (Simons & Hughes, 1991). The nature of drama in education lends itself to the realisation of enthusiasm, empathy, engagement and confident expression of expertise (Arnold, 1994; Heathcote & Bolton, 1994; Hughes, 2004; Morgan & Saxton, 1987; Neelands, 1990.). The particular role-play adopted was enactment of the expert enactment of the expert role-play was therefore undertaken (Hughes, 2004). This method draws from Heathcote's concept of mantle of the expert (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994).

The group become characters endowed with specialist knowledge that is relevant to the situation ... the situation is usually task-oriented ... power and responsibility move from teacher to group; learners feel respected by having expert status. (Neelands, 1990, p. 23).

In refining mantle of the expert we have noted that a danger exists in the implication that this process is a 'gift' or 'mantle' that is somehow transferred to a student. Rather the process, if facilitated to empower, enables the students, individually and as a group, to grow into the role of expert via psychodynamic resources that spring from their latent abilities which, in interaction with the drama environment, spiral to belief (Arnold, 1994, 2005.). The term enactment of the expert is preferred since it reflects this personal dynamic. The experience envisaged for these particular participants consisted of two cycles in enactment of the expert: teacher planning, and the active experience together with exploration of issues.

Cycle 1: Planning.

The teacher's first task was to select an issue or problem that the students had to explore. In this study we wished the students to be active participants in an exploration of the qualities of good teaching and learning. They were to be asked to respond to two questions:

1. What do good teachers do in the classroom to encourage learning?
2. What qualities do good teachers have?

It is crucial to plan for roles that the students can easily adopt, that is, roles with which they are familiar and, further, that these roles be of high status. The role chosen was university professors who are experts in education. The teacher's role was the second in command, that is, the one that does not know. In this case the teacher was in the role of a lowly reporter (Morgan & Saxton, 1987; Ewing & Simons, 2004.).

Cycle 2: The Enactment Experience.

This cycle includes four stages: developing the affective space (Boal, 1995; Hughes & Johnson, 1998), development of role, exploration of the issues and presentation of the

findings. The students were facilitated into the role of university professors in high status universities by first of all embodying statues that represented an expertise they have. These were displayed to the rest of the group. The teacher then divided the students into two groups and explained that they were to role-play professors from a famous university: group 1 selected Harvard and group 2 selected Oxford. The students then drew a map of their university and explained to the teacher- in the role of a reporter- why their university was the best in the world. That is, the facilitator/teacher devised appropriate activities to tap tacit abilities in the students. When, as a result of these drama activities, the students were confidently engaged in their high status roles as university professors, they were asked to comment, in role, on the two research questions.

Analysis of the Data.

The data indicate that for this group of high achieving year eleven students, with an expressed interest in further studies in education that the four qualities of relatedness— expertise, capacity to engage, enthusiasm and, of course, empathy— were identified here as attributes of good teaching. The students identified these qualities of empathic intelligence: expertise, enthusiasm, empathy and engagements in the following responses.

Their first responses were to the question: What do good teachers do in the classroom to encourage learning? They noted that good teachers did the following:

Give constructive criticism

Compliment students on good work

Give interesting presentations of class work

Application of learning materials to real life situations relevant for students

Discuss current issues

They are creative

They have a disciplined approach to encourage learning

They explain why a particular area needs to be learnt – make it relevant

They use new learning methods

These responses pick up, at an unsophisticated level, one of the qualities outlined in empathic intelligence- teacher expertise. They further noted, that good teachers provide student centred, engaged learning activities and approaches. Typical of the responses related to good teachers' abilities to foster engagement are the following:

Provide some interactivity and practical learning

Encourage discussion

Speak clearly and not in a monotone

Create a friendly atmosphere

They are not repetitive and vary their activities

Create interactive classrooms with student involvement

They don't use too much dictation.

They encourage students to ask questions

They encourage learning methods which are fun and educational

The students also noted that good teachers display empathy with their students as is demonstrated by the following comments on effective teachers' actions in the classroom:

Give encouragement
Not aggressive towards students' questions
They listen to students
They are not pushy, and are open and honest with students
Ability to listen to students' needs, emotions and thoughts
Fair to all students and have no favourites
They create safe, nice, happy and comfortable classrooms

In response to the question, what do good teachers do in the classroom to encourage learning, enthusiasm was not indicated as a quality of good teachers but then, enthusiasm is not an activity but rather an all pervasive attitude. The students note that enthusiasm is a key quality when responding to the next question.

Question 2. What qualities do good teachers have?

Again teacher expertise is identified as a key element. Good teachers:
Have a thorough knowledge of the subject he/she teaches
Display flexibility and a flexible personality
Ability to admit his or her own faults
Understands student abilities and potential
Is a good role model
They maintain discipline but not too much
They are creative
Have intelligence
They have experience

The last response gave us pause. Did this mean that they thought older teachers were better than younger ones? The students replied no, and that what they meant was that a good teacher was one who knew how to organize a class so that the learning was pitched at 'an appropriate level for students and that they could see a subject from the students' point of view. What the students have noted as qualities in a good teacher is a mix of expertise and empathy.

A capacity to engage students in meaningful activities and harness students' energies was also seen as a key quality. Good teachers have the following qualities:
Ability to control the classroom atmosphere without being a dictator
Have a sense of humour
Great communication skills
Are confident and have high self esteem.

Likewise enthusiasm was indicated as a quality of good teachers. Good teachers:
Have a passion for teaching
Like kids and young adolescents
Like teaching and kids
Love their subject

These students also responded strongly that empathy is an essential quality of good teachers, as the following comments make clear. Good teachers:
Promote confidence in students
They see the subject from the students' point of view

Have an understanding of young people's issues
Tolerant and patient
They are patient
They have tolerance
They are not judgmental
They have no favourites amongst the students
They have an understanding of students
They are approachable and not patronizing
They are appreciative of students
They have a friendly attitude
They are open-minded
They are encouraging
They are able to understand different perspectives of students
They understand that everyone is different

It can be seen that when students themselves are looking at pedagogy from the perspective of expertise, albeit that is an imagined expertise, namely in role as professors, they can provide from memory and embodied experience, phrases which illuminate the qualities and practices of both empathic intelligence and effective pedagogy.

This suggests that were teachers to use both the model of enactment of the expert more often in peer teaching contexts, students might well draw on their embodied understanding of good pedagogy to demonstrate good teaching/learning behaviors. That is, in articulating through role-play, good pedagogical practices, they were engaging in intra-subjective (reflection on own experiences) and inter-subjective (discussing their thoughts and feelings with others) dynamics. The nature of the experiences and the quality of the students' responses, suggest that within these kinds of dynamics, insight is embedded.

ENTHUSIASM

(En—Theos = God/Spirit within)

A personal energy conveyed to others

Motivated by belief and hope.

EXPERTISE

Mobilises imagination/perspective-taking/hypothesising

Theoretically informed about teaching, effective in practice and competent in discipline area

Able to attune to others' learning needs

Can recognise both regressive and developmental states—spiralling development

Can see the universal, particular and affective characteristics of different symbolic systems (eg. art, design, language, mathematics, dance)

Has expansive repertoire of approaches

Can model best practices and can tolerate own and others' mistakes.

ENGAGEMENT

Ability to attract and hold students' attention through centred, purposeful interactions

Ability to mirror others to enhance communication

Ability to channel/teacher-power/authority/charisma for the benefit of students' learning

Communicates a vision beyond the here and now.

EMPATHY

Empathy is an ability to understand your own thoughts and feelings and, by analogy, apply your self understanding to the service of others, mindful that their thinking and feeling may not match your own.

It is a sophisticated ability involving attunement, decentring, conjecture and introspection: an act of thoughtful, heartfelt imagination.

There is synergy between the theory of empathic intelligence and students' perceptions, the latter having a quality of immediacy, frankness, openness and confidence developed through drama as a learning medium. Further, their comments are a reminder of the perspicacity of learners who have experienced pedagogy over many years.

Discussion.

Empathic intelligence is theorised and elaborated here to explain some of the phenomena involved in teaching and influencing others. While specific attributes of empathic intelligence can be identified, in practice empathic intelligence functions in an integrated way. All this happens quickly, and often imperceptibly, as inter/intra-subjective processes interact in the engagement between the teacher and student. Whatever happens, the teacher's expertise is needed to interpret the best approach and to provide a range of strategies. These might include acknowledging, with the student, a need to work together to find the best way forward.

Empathic intelligence is a complex system of functioning supported by culture and human responsiveness. For example, it can be supported by the associative link that narratives can provide. Imagination and emotional sensitivities can expand through reflections upon personal or cultural narratives, through films, music, drama or art.

Cultures can provide a kind of cognitive and emotional scaffolding for the development of their members. Hence the importance in education of promoting various symbolic systems, such as music, dance, sculpture, art, design or, in the case of this study, drama, as sources for aesthetic, affective and cognitive development.

Enthusiasm is an attractive concept because by its very nature it draws attention to itself. Enthusiasm refers to the sense of spiritedness, joy, resilience, confidence and warmth which people demonstrate as they work and engage with others. It is not essential for enthusiasm to be highly energetic, though it can be. At times it can manifest as a deep-seated, emotionally charged, but managed, commitment to whatever is happening. It is relatively easy to recognise overt enthusiasm. But where students have learnt to mask enthusiasm, for whatever personal or cultural reasons, it can take some sensitivity to read enthusiasm or to stimulate it. Caring enough to listen to doubting or disaffected students, even when their messages are unpalatable, can be

a form of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can spark and sustain engagement, but in contexts where learning is the desired outcome, expertise also has to function to make the engagement purposeful and focused, as distinct from merely entertaining or diverting. This is not to suggest that pedagogy has to be earnest. Rather, it is to suggest that in a functional engagement, at least one participant has to have the expertise to monitor the dynamic. This attribute may not be exclusive to the teacher or professional.

Ideally, the student will respond to the teacher's cues and be stimulated through modelling, to be enthusiastic and engaged too. Sometimes, the student's enthusiasm and engagement will be directed differently to the teacher's, or be masked or dormant. Then the skilled teacher works to create a synergy between them through a process of adaptation and informed improvisation.

Effective teaching.

The study supports the arguments that for this group of students, the positive influence of teacher quality upon pedagogy was recognized. This insight is well established through research. To determine the attributes of excellence Hattie (2003) studied 'America's very best teachers' (p.1). He argues that the ingredient that makes the most difference in pedagogy is the classroom teacher. He elaborates that our attention therefore must be primarily directed at higher quality teaching. To that end, we need to 'identify, esteem, and grow those who have powerful influences on student learning' (p.4).

Learning is an interactive experience best achieved in a climate of relatedness, care and mutual respect. Such care is offered, not imposed, and respects humans' need for autonomy, self-determination, and challenge as well as security. In this empathic model, learning is a dynamic, democratic process. An understanding of this process and the ability to put it into effect generally mark an empathically intelligent and effective educator. Such a person harnesses complex intellectual, affective and interpersonal skills for the benefit of students and others for whom they are responsible. In a typical classroom high-level skills are required to manage constructively all the variables and dynamics. Sensitivity, attunement to others, acute observation skills and robust self-scrutiny and self-understanding are precursors to empathic intelligence and effective teaching.

The study suggests that teachers need to be encouraged to respect what many of them already know intuitively—that students' motivations and feelings about learning are just as important as the content of their learning. It is not just what we learn, but how we feel about what we learn, which counts in the long term. When we care about a learning experience, it tends to influence us more strongly, for positive or negative effect.

Fine tuning psychic development.

At the heart of the empathic, transformative model advocated here, is a principle that educators who can engage students in a dynamic exploration of thought and feeling, can promote increased differentiation in both modes of being. In this model, thought becomes increasingly more complex and feelings become more accessible and finely tuned. Their expression in language, movement and aesthetic artefacts records

experiences, reflects both moments of insight and points in development, and in turn stimulates further thought and feeling.

It would seem from our study here that we need to learn how to listen to students, how to hear what they are able to tell about effective pedagogy and work out how best to give them teachers confident that the human and professional qualities of expertise, engagement, enthusiasm and empathy can make a difference.

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