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# **In search of excellence, sharing our experiences of inspirational teaching**

Alan Smith (2015 NTF)

Divine Charura

Paul Nicholson

# Background to this presentation

School Away Day – 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017



*Luckily, a fellow NTF had recently circulated an article he had written ... thank you James G. Derounian!*

How to disseminate good practice  
in teaching and learning

*But first a question ...*



Recommended Citation  
Derounian, James G. Mr. (2017) 'Inspirational teaching in higher education: What does it look, sound and feel like?' International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Vol. 11, No. 1, Article 9.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2017.110109>

# How to disseminate good practice in teaching and learning

*But first a question ...*

What is 'good' teaching ?

What is 'good' teaching ?

*But*

Is 'good' 'good enough' ?

What is ~~'good'~~

'very good' teaching ?

What is ~~'good'~~

~~'very good'~~

'exceptional' teaching ?



What is ~~'good'~~

~~'very good'~~

~~'exceptional'~~

'inspirational' teaching ?

# Group Tasks – at your table

- Who do you remember as a 'good' (or inspirational) teacher, what made them 'good / inspirational' ?

Using the flip chart, draw an outline on one side of the sheet – and write / draw / doodle all around it



# Next task ...

- Who do you remember as a 'good' (or inspirational) teacher, what made them 'good / inspirational' ?
- Think of one of your classes / lectures that you believe exemplifies 'good / inspirational' teaching, what made it 'good / inspirational' ?

On the opposite side, try and capture what it is to be inspirational



# Next task ...

- Who do you remember as a 'good' (or inspirational) teacher, what made them 'good / inspirational' ?
- Think of one of your classes / lectures that you believe exemplifies 'good / inspirational' teaching, what made it 'good / inspirational' ?
- How do the two lists compare ?

What is ~~'good'~~

~~'very good'~~

~~'exceptional'~~

'inspirational' teaching ?

But: What is 'good enough' teaching ?

*and* Is 'good' 'good enough' ?

And is teaching what it is all about ...  
where is the learner in this process ?





And this is where it links back to Derounian's article ...

- Teaching Excellence Framework
- Key Performance Indicators
- Learners as Consumers / marketisation of HE
- National Student Survey / League tables
- Staff feel valued / Learners are more engaged
- It makes our life easier
- It's probably why we do the job we do

# Sharing the responsibility and successes

Derounian (2017) suggests there are three clear elements to inspirational teaching:

- Undergraduates believe it to be motivating
- It is / feels encouraging
- It flows from the teachers' passion for their subject

And at that point we decided that we should bring the two aspects together – student expectation and teacher perception

# Some initial thoughts from a Youth and Community Work perspective

- Teaching and learning is a 2-way process, we must become co-producers, sharing the journey together
- How do we engage students, what do we do that creates the environment for learning – do we welcome their participation, or police their non-participation?
- Do we limit their excitement through professional expectations from Day 1 and forget they are students on a journey?

Much of our work is underpinned by the ideas and critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, so here are some of his ideas...

“education can never be neutral ... the process of education either creates critical, autonomous thinkers or it renders people passive and unquestioning”

and

[the] “... educator with a democratic vision or posture cannot avoid in their teaching praxis insisting on the critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the learner”

# Some initial findings and observations

35 academic staff from across 8 subject teams, representing lecturers, senior lecturers, principal lecturers, University Teaching Fellows, National Teaching Fellows and the Dean.

What is Inspirational teaching – emergent key themes

- Interactive / discussion-based learning engages students
- Learning together, working in partnership
- Open to challenge and willing to acknowledge they don't have the answer
- Recognises pre-learning and that student's bring knowledge, skills and experience to the learning process
- Offers practical examples that can be contextualised
- Models good practice, shares passion and can grab the attention quickly

# Examples of good / inspirational teaching

- Reduce or remove Powerpoint
- Use of games / role play (murder mystery)
- Create space for structured critical reflection
- Do the unexpected, but give insights and explanations of the experience as it happens – opening their eyes to the scary and unnerving
- Take students outside their comfort zone
- Its well structured but may not look it, and students can take ownership of their learning in the process
- Co-teaching engages different learning styles and creates a dynamic environment
- Relevant and timely – responsive to students or external factors

# What next

We will be writing an article in response to James Derounian's article, offering the teacher's perspective on what is inspirational teaching.

We will add some of today's discussions into the process, and hopefully continue the conversation more widely.

If you want to know more, or to contribute:

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*Thank you*