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CRJC370

Michael DeValve
Fayetteville State University, mdevalve@uncfsu.edu

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Fayetteville State University
Impact of Integrated course Design
Report Completed After Course Completion

Name: Michael DeValve **Semester (revised course was taught):** Spring and Fall 2010

Course Title and Description: *CRJC 370: Mediation / Restorative Justice*. This course is a variable topics course in which students explore current critical issues in the field of criminal justice. Topics will change based on the interests and expertise of the instructor and a student may retake the course to a maximum of nine credits with change of topic.

This service learning course in restorative justice is designed to provide rich theoretical and practical exposure to approaches to justice that prioritize healing. Not only will students be exposed to important academic literature in the area of restorative justice, they will have the opportunity to experience how the ideas within the academic discourse apply to the real world through students' experiences witnessing and conducting court-ordered mediations. Additionally, students will appreciate the human benefits of affecting justice through healing-centered practices. Finally, students will be enabled to teach themselves more about restorative justice ideas and practices.

At the completion of the course, students will have received the Basic Mediation Training (BMT) acknowledged by the Mediation Network of North Carolina to qualify them to conduct mediations. Students will also take part in court-ordered mediations, at first as co-mediators with a certified mediator, eventually as mediators.

1. **Explain the impact your "In-Depth Analysis of Situational Factors" had on your approach to the course.**

   Contextualizing the class reemphasized the importance of context in content, thereby allowing me to affect a more robust connection between content and students. The in-depth analysis highlighted for me the importance of enriching the context-sensitive nature of the course content. Restorative justice requires community members to take ownership of justice service, in order to serve their own justice values. That means that there needs to be a fine-tuning of awareness of our own values regarding collective responses to harm. I had students in the class that came from a variety of backgrounds, and as a result, I was able to draw on their experiences in their respective communities in order to emphasize the necessity of context-responsiveness in justice practice. Without having prepared in this fashion, I might well have missed the opportunity to "leverage" participants' functional diversity toward their learning.

Another way in which in-depth analysis aided my course implementation is that it encouraged me to consider how this elective special topics class fits in with the larger criminal justice curriculum. At the time, my sense was that we as a department were incomplete in our responsibility to critique the existing justice paradigm, and to present viable alternatives to current practice. As a result of the in-depth analysis, I reframed a graduate class I often teach, CRJC 610, Organizational Change in Criminal Justice, to focus on transformation of suffering and functional diversity.

The course, offered both Spring and Fall 2010, was implemented with a service learning component at its core. All but one in the spring, and all but a few in the fall, earned state certification as mediators. They had specialized training, but more importantly, all who became state certified were party to at least 20 mediations involving criminal charges, Medicaid disputes, juveniles, or permanency hearings. They were active in ameliorating harms in their community, so the presentation of context could not be avoided.

2. **Explain the impact of the Taxonomy of Significant Learning (foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring or valuing, and learning to learn) on your development of learning goals.**

The taxonomy emphasized for me aspects of learning that drew me into academia in the first place, and that have kept me in this profession. Autodidacticism seems to me to be underemphasized in public schools. The course, in order to be true to content, must emphasize caring, as well as the humanity of victims and offenders alike. The service learning component required students to apply and integrate classroom content (foundational knowledge) with real-life experiences.

My sense is that students left the class with a deeper sense of the importance of compassion in justice. All students met the minimum requirements of the course, and all earned good grades. Only a handful of students, however, have maintained their relationship with the DRC (the service learning site). Although I am confident that the students were challenged to think differently about justice, they may not have taken fully on board the importance of service, that healing requires discipline and commitment. That said, some students indicated the desire to create a mediation center in counties where no center exists. Of course, it remains to be seen what fruits come from the learning from these courses.

The class necessarily had to strike a balance between goals that competed at least for resources. One can't do it all. I had to consider what readings, what

conversations were essential, which were important, and which would be nice. The triaging process was useful in reassessing and helping to focus the core message of the class (transformation of suffering).

3. **Explain the impact of ICD on your assessment/feedback activities in the course, including the FIDeLity criteria.**

   Two assessment/feedback devices resulted from ICD. First, I required students to maintain journals. Although I still do this in most of my classes, in the spring, I left students to their own devices, with periodic checks to make sure students were writing. What I found was that although many were maintaining a journal, it was merely a journal of events in class. In the Fall I was more formal about journal maintenance, as well more detailed with regard to guidance.
   Second, and more specifically for this course, I had students do an in-class assignment where they were to take all they'd learned in the mediation training embedded in the course, and after a supporting class discussion, they would create a rubric for evaluating mediators (the trainer, the professor, the graduate assistant, other students, and other volunteer mediators). My sense is that the assignment was a highly useful one, not merely from the legitimacy of the resulting rubric, but also from the perspective of its value in requiring them to consider not only what makes a good mediator, but also how one might go about assessing mediation relative to those things that "really matter."

4. **Explain how ICD influenced your teaching and learning activities.**

   I think ICD deepened my commitment to framing formally transformation of harm, contemplation, as coequal with fundamental concepts. And I guess what is unexpected about this is that I now see content and skills existing side by side in the classroom space, regardless of whether the course is designated formally as a service-learning experience or not, and whether the content is on restorative justice/peacemaking criminology or not.

   Additionally, I am more focused on mutual accountability. I tended to hold myself more accountable for my issues than I did for students for theirs. If a problem in class arose, I assumed it was my error more often than not. I am now more careful to scrutinize circumstances, assume responsibility as appropriate, but when students fail to uphold their end of the bargain, I hold them fully accountable, while applying restorative justice principles in the classroom. I do all I can to encourage students to take ownership of their own learning, and although I valued this before, I don't think I was as effective at implementing student ownership before.

5. **Explain how you sought to integrate teaching and learning activities with learning goals.**

   Wednesday discussions were often allocated for debriefing, after Monday mediations. Specific events from mediations were raised by students, and revisited in classroom discussions. Debriefing is essential after mediations generally in order to allow mediators to work through toxic emotions that may arise during mediations. Wednesday debriefings also allowed for a chance to connect specific events with specific mediation practices, offered both in the training and in the academic literature. I was careful, however, to avoid a "Monday morning quarterback" atmosphere in these conversations. Never were comments offered as criticism, but as support, in a respectful and supportive context. Students also offered interesting and useful comments about other students, and this "peer-review" process seems to have worked to keep students active in the process of engagement, more than if the professor had been the source of all critique.

6. **Explain whether ICD had an impact on your own satisfaction in teaching the course.**

   Yes, without a shadow of doubt, I feel like ICD deepened my enjoyment of the class. I felt like I was more fully able to realize my skill set and professional philosophy. I felt freer in this class to approach the content as I think it should be presented. In retrospect, I find this ironic, as I have never felt actively curtailed in my teaching. To some degree, the process of beginning with ideal outcomes and walking deliberately through the ICD taxonomy acted to support and justify my thinking about how RJ should be presented.

   In the future, I would like to take this process a step further and teach the course from a Frierian perspective. One reason for doing so would be the full contextualization of students and content.

7. **Summarize any evidence you have on the impact of the re-designed course on student learning.**

   All 11 students in the class earned As. Writing assignments exceeded my expectations, and although journals were not ideal, generally, they evidenced considerable contemplation and growth. My expectation was only that they complete the basic mediation training, and sufficient cases to get sworn in as

mediators in the county. All students but one completed enough cases to be state certified, several times more cases than I had anticipated. The one student who did not earn state certification in Spring has since, as I understand it, earned state certification.

Far more important than grades, however, students were visibly changed as a result of the course. Some students did internships with the DRC after their class experience. Although subsequent interactions between DRC and students have been relatively few, the possibility remains that students will begin mediation centers elsewhere. Some students have maintained a dialogue with me on the topic of restorative justice, as well as how to secure grant funding for mediation centers and halfway houses.

MEDIATION ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Mediator(s)_____

Rater_____

Axis	Great	Fair	Weak	Explanation
Professionalism: appearance, paperwork, detailed, problem-solving, commitment,				

confidential				
Responsiveness to Circumstances: Creative, flexible, equal, nonjudgmental, Follow-to-lead				
Communication: Listening, reflecting, paraphrasing, writing				
Emotional Maturity: calm, sympathetic, empathetic, loving, centered				