

Equity and Engagement:



**THE POWER OF SIMPLE TOOLS IN COMPLEX,
CONTRADICTIONARY CONTEXTS**

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Economic Inequality in the US



- In 2010, according to the National Poverty Center, 27.4% of blacks and 26.6% of Latinos were living in poverty compared to 9.9% of non-Hispanic whites and 12.1% of Asians.
- According to the Children's Defense Fund, in 2012, approximately one in three children of color were poor. Nearly half of all states had black child poverty rates of 40% or more.

Student borrowing for tertiary education



“81 percent of black students must borrow for a bachelor’s degree compared to 63 percent of white students. Low-income students—those who receive Pell Grants—are overwhelmingly more likely to borrow for a degree as well: 84 percent of Pell recipients who graduate must borrow compared to less than half (46 percent) of non-Pell recipients.”

○ (Mark Huelsman. Demos.org 2016)

Student income post-graduation



“Black college graduates are about as likely as white high school graduates to be unemployed, and have the average household wealth of white high school dropouts. So even after potentially earning a degree, those who came to college with fewer savings are less likely to see an earnings and wealth boost associated with a bachelor’s degree.”

Darrick Hamilton & William Darity (2016)
Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

The role of educators...



In his forward to Richard Millner's book *Rac(e)ing to Class: Confronting Poverty and Race in Schools and Classrooms*, Tyrone Howard argues that, "it is abundantly clear that the United States must respond to its most marginalized citizens in a different way"—and, he writes, the role that educators can play cannot be overstated.

The conundrum of inequality in the US



- Education alone can't solve structural inequality—too much responsibility for equity can be placed on teachers
- And yet, without degrees and certificates, opportunities for students to earn living wages diminish
- Conclusion: education is necessary, but it doesn't offer a guarantee.

In what ways does this resonate for you?



- Turn to a colleague next to you, or behind you, and talk about the nature of economic inequality in your contexts—New Zealand and Australia.
 - In what ways is it similar, if at all?
 - In what ways is it different?
- The purpose of these chats is to reflect for a moment on the larger social/political contexts in which we work.

Challenge--what do we do?



- **What do we do with limited funds, finite time, to improve students' experiences of learning?**

Engage learners' preconceptions



- We have to find out what learners are bringing to the learning experiences we are designing, and find ways to engage their preconceptions. (John Bransford et al, How People Learn, 1999)
- *Question:* what did you imagine I would be talking about? How does what I've been saying so far match, or go against, your preconceptions?

The Transparency Framework initiative



- Have a look at the “Unwritten Rules” (one side) and the Transparent Assignment Template (other side) by Mary-Ann Winkelmes, University of Nevada Las Vegas:
<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>
- Key features: be explicit with students about the purpose of an assignment, the task, and the criteria
- Results: increased student success

Applying the Transparency Template



- Have a look at the Less Transparent/More Transparent assignment example from the UNLV project
- Turn to a neighbor or two, and talk about the differences between the two versions
- Could you use a template like this in your contexts?

Carol Dweck's growth mindset



- Began with her interest in motivation
- Motivation depends in part on the way we understand our abilities:
 - If we believe our abilities are fixed—we have a certain amount—we lose motivation at some point
 - If we believe our ability is a function of our efforts, we are more likely to persist in practicing

Key takeaway? We can change our mindsets
(<http://mindsetonline.com/whatisit/about/>)

Inviting students to notice their mindsets



- Experimented by asking them to assess their efforts when they turned in drafts
- Repeated this assessment with each assignment
- Have a look at what Ross wrote (he says hello!)

Small moves that make a difference?



- Taking learners' preconceptions seriously
- Trying out the transparency framework
- Working with student on noticing and shifting their mindsets

What sustains us?



“The secret to quality is love.”

Avedis Donabedian, professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan, and inventor of the Donabedian triad--quality can be measured by looking at outcomes, processes and structure

(as quoted by Robert Wachter in the 1-17-16 New York Times article, “How Measurement Fails Us”)

Questions?



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