

Help! My lesson bombed: Recovering from a classroom failure

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Using research papers in the classroom. . .

- For content.

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- For methods.

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- For content.
- For methods.
- For intervention??

- Two-semester probability/statistics sequence
- Mostly upper-level actuarial science students
- Risk factors included. . .

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 - Difficult course content.
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 - Low study time / no office hours attendance.
- Fall course evaluations
 - Structure (e.g. unhelpful materials, unclear grading system)
 - Level (e.g. graduate level, too much self-learning)
 - Personal (e.g. not invested in class, only cares about research)

- The Flipped Classroom, Lethal Mutations, and the Didactical Contract: A Cautionary Tale (S. Bagley, PRIMUS)
- Unsuccessful flipped classroom concept.
- Focus group data—**similar comments!**

Key concept: didactical contract

The instructor must. . .

- create sufficient conditions for the appropriation of knowledge.
- recognize this appropriation when it occurs.
- provide the student with the possibility of new learning.

The student must satisfy the instructor's conditions, and thereby learn.

- Personal critiques—how to interpret?
- Manuscript as a buffer.
- Didactical contract gives language to negative feelings.

- First day of second semester.

Intervention

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- Relate manuscript theory to shared experience.

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- Did the discussion of the didactical contract change your experiences from last semester to this semester?
- Have your expectations for college courses changed since last semester?

- Structure and Level were improved (e.g. accessibility, scaffolding, materials, expectations).
- Intervention improved student expectations and belief in instructor investment.
- **Students asserted greater responsibility for their part of the contract.**

“The didactical contract made me realize that there is a shared responsibility with any course between professor and student and it is always my responsibility to make sure I’m doing my part.”

“When I am frustrated with classes, I look back and go through the steps and ideas of the didactical contract.”

“After talking about the didactical contract I definitely understand more why it’s important for professors to provide student’s with opportunities outside the class to learn the material and why it is important for students to use those resources.”

“Most professors don’t acknowledge their faults in the didactical contract, so in that regard so I felt as if the conversation changed my mind frame going into 416.”

“Last semester was very overwhelming and for the first time honestly made me feel like I was not smart enough to understand what was going on and I needed to put in a lot more effort just because I was very confused about everything. After this semester I have a lot more positive expectations about college courses and feel more able.”

“My expectations have changed with higher level courses. Professors tend to give us more freedom and time to reflect and think about topics rather than just citing facts and giving answers.”

“I think most math material is too challenging to try and develop and understanding for, so I expected to be taught to me. My expectations have changed because now I realized there is a way to do math with inquiry based learning.”

Conclusions

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Outcome

Students not only responded positively to the intervention, but also became more receptive to and successful with the inquiry-based model.