Dialogic Teaching Learning Community

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the joy of Talk

IF WE IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CLASSROOM TALK, WE IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LEARNING.

—NEIL MERCER, 2014

Who are we? And what did we do?

We are a group of educators that have a common interest in dialogic teaching across a range of modalities, disciplines, and approaches. We sought to better understand dialogic teaching and how to improve it!

To help us structure our learning community, we came up with four guiding questions.

1. What is dialogic teaching? What pedagogical constructs and theories is it rooted in?
2. How can we track and improve our dialogic teaching practices?
3. How do we foster better dialogic communities in all levels of teaching in the university?
4. How can we better employ dialogic teaching interdisciplinary teaching?

What is Dialogic Teaching?

Dialogue: oral exchange and deliberative handling of information, ideas, and opinions

Dialogic Teaching:

Pedagogy of the spoken word that harnesses the power of dialogue to *stimulate* and *extend* students' thinking, knowing, and understanding

Enable them to discuss, reason, and argue

Principles

What principles should underpin dialogical teaching?

Or how should dialogical teaching be organized?

COLLECTIVE
- Participants address learning tasks together

RECIPROCAL
- Participants listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints

SUPPORTIVE
- Participants articulate their ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment over 'wrong' answers, and they help each other to reach common understandings
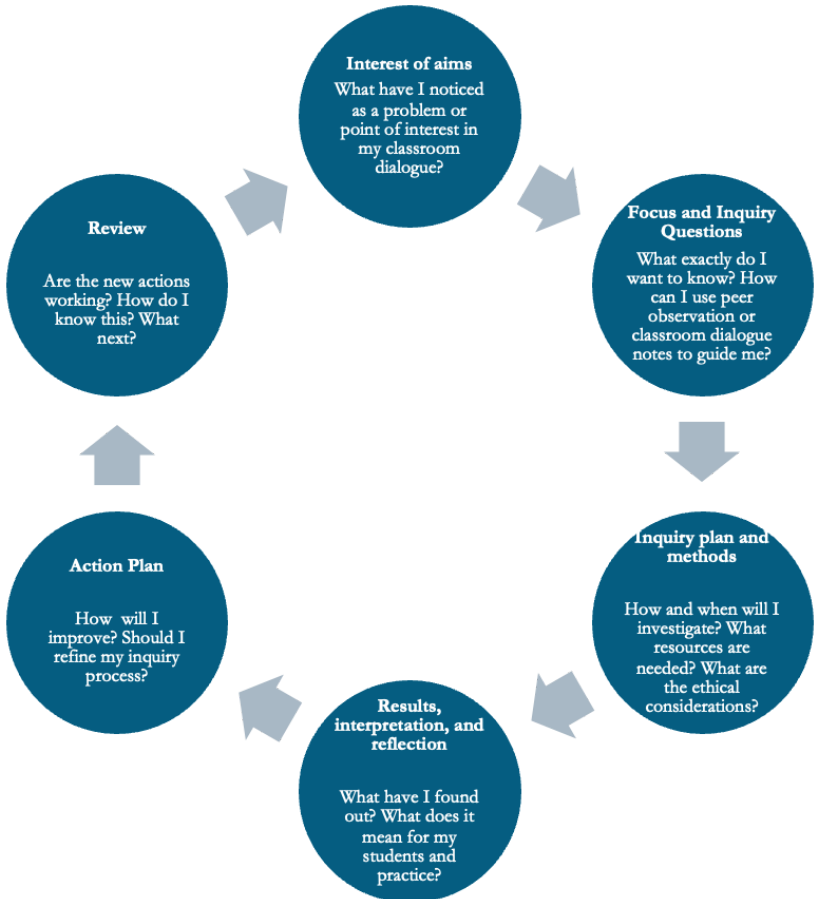
CUMULATIVE
- Participants build on answers and other oral contributions and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and understanding

PURPOSEFUL
- Classroom talk, though open and dialogic, is also planned and structured with specific learning goals in view

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How can we track and improve our dialogic teaching practices?

Interest of aims
What have I noticed as a problem or point of interest in my classroom dialogue?

Focus and Inquiry Questions
What exactly do I want to know? How can I use peer observation or classroom dialogue notes to guide me?

Inquiry plan and methods
How and when will I investigate? What resources are needed? What are the ethical considerations?

Results, interpretation, and reflection
What have I found out? What does it mean for my students and practice?

Action Plan
How will I improve? Should I refine my inquiry process?

Review
Are the new actions working? How do I know this? What next?

Two Interventions

- **Intervention A: Team-Based Learning Protocol**
  - After a sharing session with Russell Marcus, Shivani decided to implement a team-teaching intervention in her classes
  - She converted her classroom sessions to blended sessions, and carried out pre- and post-dialogue session tests (IRATs and TRAT)
  - She will continue to implement the protocol to get a better understanding of its effects
- **Intervention B: Longitudinal Effects of Reflecting upon Dialogue**
  - After some research, Joel and Daryl have decided to track students' competencies in dialogue through a semester and to test if getting students to reflect on their dialogue improves dialogic capacities
  - Initial baseline: Alexander (2010)'s dialogic competencies
  - Students will check in periodically through the semester with self-reviews and peer reviews
  - Post-semester review

How can we foster dialogic communities at all levels in NUS?

Create more opportunities for faculty-graduate student mentorship for teaching, like our sharing by Marcus Russell

Creating safe spaces where faculty can openly share their challenges with one another

Faculty members should take the initiative to facilitate dialogue in the classroom and emphasize its value

Residential colleges are a great space for dialogue amongst students and between students and faculty – we need to leverage that more!

Good dialogue is only possible if we are cognitively and emotionally present – we need to facilitate and ensure students can share openly and tune into one another

It can be daunting to engage in dialogue, especially in the classroom! But trying is the first step.