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## Engaging First Year Students in Assessment Rubrics: Three Personal Experiences

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## Engaging First Year Students in Assessment Rubrics: Three Personal Experiences

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*Abstract: In a direct effort to build a greater understanding of higher education teaching and learning opportunities, this study shares the journey of three university lecturers working to ensure best practice outcomes from criterion-referenced assessment [CRA]. The work was built on a belief that our respective higher education undergraduate students did not fully value the design structure or feedback outcomes inherent in CRA. Using a collaborative autoethnographic lens we pooled experiences, outcomes, challenges, assumptions, and accounts of unconscious biases from across our different tertiary education schools and subjects. Our examination enriched our understanding, our teaching, and our student outcomes. In sharing our journey we offer three unique, yet jointly considered perspectives on using CRA to extend and enhance learning.*

### Introduction

The paper presented here works to address a concern, felt by three university lecturers, Kate, Kristina, and Dona. We each work with first year higher education undergraduate students, but in different schools/departments and across two universities. We came together for this study due to a common concern that the majority of our students and some of our assessors were not fully engaging with the support mechanisms inherent in criterion-referenced assessment rubrics [CRA].

Our story focusses on our experiences, working either within the School of Education or School of Business, across two universities in Victoria, Australia. We are three colleagues, Kate who teaches business accounting, Dona who teaches curriculum and assessment in education, both working at La Trobe University's Bendigo campus, and Kristina, who teaches into mathematics education at Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia. Despite working across two universities, with three completely different student cohorts, in our discussions we found that our students, share many commonalities. They each make up a student body representative of how well the sector embraces diversity, meaning they come from a wide and inclusive section of the community. For example, there is a spread of students from low to high socio-economic status, many are young, some mature age, each cohort has students who were first in their families to attempt undergraduate studies, there was Indigenous students, international and national students and gender diverse students. Not surprisingly in our discussions we also found that within each of our first semester, first year, undergraduate university cohorts, common concerns. The one most intriguing, and the focus of this study, was that we had a number of students and assessors that did not value CRA

tasks as efficient modes of assessment in that they share targeted, inbuilt feedback mechanisms.

Alert to the research of Cameron (2008), that there should be a greater focus on understanding and valuing feedback in the teaching of first-year university students. As well as that of Krause (2005), and Williford and Schaller (2005) who note, assessment outcomes from the first year at university, particularly first semester, are key determinants of student performance. Also, that this first year period is one that offers up as a reasonable indicator of a student's likelihood to complete their chosen course. Our discussions centred on our personal experiences. We shared a belief that if we applied then shared a reflective attention-to-detail lens to how we each supported our students and assessors to understand the inherent feedback elements of CRA, then our shared perspectives might provide wider exposure to where and how to improve the learning environment.

We therefore built a study that focussed on how we could educate our students and assessors on what CRA offers as a transparent assessment process. Assessment that provides assessors a common language to connect outcomes with pre-specified criteria and students, opportunity to participate in the process of evaluating their own learning. We did this as we believed that in being alert to how to use pre-specified criteria as set out in CRA, we could encourage assessors to engage with the shared language, and have students self-assess their mark against the standards or performance descriptors presented in the assessment rubric. In the process we expected we could also highlight how the descriptors are aligned with the knowledge and skills initially defined by the intended learning outcomes [ILO] of their subject (Brown, 1998; Harvey, 2004).

So, we had CRA as a common component of our three very different first-year subjects. We also had differing approaches to the use of CRA, and our own ideas on how to build knowledge of CRA with our particular student and assessor cohorts. Another commonality was that we each kept reflective notes of classroom encounters, used in consideration of our teaching and learning programs and processes and to examine our own particular style of teaching. We therefore devised a project whereby we could work in our own unique settings analysing our own pedagogical style, then come together at pre-determined times to share our outcomes and challenge each other's assumptions.

We were further inspired in our joint project after engaging with research undertaken by Dirndorfer Anderson's (2015), who found 'collaborative autoethnographic' research had offered her a way to value the pooling of autoethnography experiences. Her work provided us a platform, an opportunity for enriching our understandings via a contextualisation of the character of information practices gained within situated sites of engagement. We further valued it as a mode of research after engaging with the research of Lapadat (2017), whose work using 'collaborative autoethnography' evidenced its multivocal approach, as phenomena whereby the views of two or more researchers, are collectively shared and interpreted as autoethnographic data.

We therefore established the autoethnography aspect of the study so we could each describe and consider personal experiences. Which in turn, enabled us the opportunity to gain clearer understandings of the educational experience (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011), as it gave each of us the freedom to explore personal interactions by reflecting on, and as a result, better understanding how our influences impact our teaching exchanges. We considered that through each of us keeping a semi-structured journal we could catch existential moments via a narrative discourse.

Then at set times, we engaged in collaborative discussions, where we sought to challenge each other's assumptions and highlight any perceived unconscious biases. Here the work of researchers such as, Dirndorfer Anderson's (2015), Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011), and Lapadat (2017), were particularly valued as they demonstrated how in extending

the reach of autoethnography through a joint lens aspect, we could address some of the methodological and ethical issues associated with autoethnography. For example, the wider lens offered us greater scope and inclusivity and enhanced rigor, whilst providing opportunity for collegial relationship building.

We therefore designed a project where we committed to meet twice, mid-way through first semester and at the conclusion of the semester to share insights, challenge each other's reflections, and unpack perceived biases. This research paper presents outcomes of three distinct accounts of ways to engage stakeholders in developing deeper understanding of the feedback outcomes built into CRA. Our project uses a collaborative autoethnographic lens, presented by three researchers working across two universities with three different first-year, first semester, student cohorts.

## **Methodology**

Our journey began in a research environment when as three university researchers and educators all working in the first semester of first year, we shared a concern that many of our students, along with some of our peers/assessors, did not value, perhaps did not understand how to read and use, the feedback offered within CRA. Nor have sufficient experience to appreciate what CRA offered in terms of personal analysis, or critical reflection. Further, in being aware that our subjectivity guides what aspects of a topic we use, as well as how we conceptualise it and interpret supporting data, we knew that the method, or action plan, we employed had to be one that supported opportunity for a personal reflection on our individual teaching styles, values and objectives.

We initially identified 'autoethnography' as the most appropriate methodology to each examine our personal stories of using criterion-based assessment. We began to frame our discussions within current literature, as a means of developing a deeper understanding of this practice and as a way to ensure we were able to capture any transformational practices. Transformations as described by Chang (2008), Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) and Starr (2010) who explore autoethnography as offering epiphanies that can become a catalyst for positive change.

We found autoethnography as both interpretive, including personal perspectives at all stages of the research, as well as constructive, in that a researcher can be transformed during the self-analytical process (Chang, 2008). We felt autoethnography offered each of us a vehicle whereby we could consider our personal experiences as an important source of knowledge (Ellis & Adams, 2014). And as a way to use personal experience to illustrate facets of experience and make clear characteristics of the familiar for insiders and outsiders alike (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).

But of course, we wanted more. While each of us, Kate, Kristina, and Dona, valued autoethnographic methods as a way to enhance our teaching and potentially integrate our personal stories with academic research, as discussed by Chang (2008), we also wanted a way to collaboratively expose, explore and challenge assumptions. The work of Dann et al. (2019), on collaborative autoethnography offered methods that suited our need. In collaborative autoethnography we had a pathway forward, as it enabled personal engagement in non-exploitative and accessible research, where participant researchers could shift between individual to collective agency.

## **Method**

Buoyed to find peer reviewed accounts of ‘collaborative autoethnography’, we decided that was an approach that would be valuable to our students, our assessors, ourselves, and the wider academic community. We therefore constructed a study based on reflection, analysis and interpretation of experiences.

Using a semi-structured framework in our reflective journals our initial entries included:

- setting ourselves a research aim/question
- creating a definition of our philosophical stance, used to position ourselves within the study;
- including reflections on our personal motivation;
- consideration of what we would accept as evidence of growth; and,
- an exploration of ideas on the value of feedback, particularly in relation to CRA

We scheduled two meetings. The first to occur mid-way through semester one, around week six, the other at the conclusion of the semester, after our assessment rubrics had been used. The second semi-structured meeting was to provide an opportunity to reflect on our outcomes. To discuss if we had met our unique aims, to further explore our own positioning, and to see how well we met the joint goal of each cohort finding a greater value in the feedback inherent in CRA.

Following are the aims and objectives we devised.

### **Aims and Objectives**

#### **Kate’s Aim**

Was to monitor and improve the feedback assessors supplied so students were supported to challenge their learning outcomes against learning intentions and success criteria.

#### **Kristina’s Aim**

Was to engage PST in a focussed analysis of CRA, within authentic and supported environments designed to motivated them further toward building growth mindsets.

#### **Dona’s Aim**

Was to strengthen understandings of how best to assist PST to develop strong understandings of how meaningful assessment knowledge can be to learners.

#### **Our Joint Objective**

Was to be honest with each other about the best ways to have each of our cohorts find greater value in the feedback inherent in CRA.

The next section of the paper, Reflective positioning, is a reflective account of what we shared at our first meeting. Had we positioned ourselves philosophically, expressed our motivation, had we each explored the notion of feedback in relation to CRA rubrics, and had we refined our research aims, personal and joint?

## Reflective Positioning

### Kate's Reflective Positioning

My PhD into motivation in education grounded my philosophy of education with learning theory. Such knowledge underpins my teaching in accountancy with first-year students, as it encouraged me to explore not only how and what I teach, but also how I work to meet the needs and expectations of a diverse student cohort. I find I am constantly considering the literature we engage with, curriculum design and content, and questioning 'What is learning?'. A question highlighted to me in my PhD, from Schunk, (1991) and Shuell, (1986). Shuell's definition has a degree of consistency, with many scholars:

*[Learning is] (a) a change in an individual's behavior or ability to do something, (b) a stipulation that this change must result from some sort of practice or experience, and (c) a stipulation that the change is an enduring one. (Shuell, 1986, 412)*

It is a definition that provides me a foundation in my teaching as it reminds me that whilst the teacher is obviously an important facilitator in learning, it is 'what the student does [that] is actually more important in determining what is learned' (Shuell, 1986: 429). A statement that not only emphasises the importance of the student being involved in the entirety of the learning process but one that also ties in with the work of Hattie (2007) and his work on the impact on learners of timely and quality feedback. Hattie argues that students who value feedback are learners that demonstrate as more self-directed and internally motivated. As they value feedback not merely as way to correct their errors but as an opportunity to reconsider their work. I therefore see an appropriate valuing of feedback on a student's work as imperative to the iterative process of learning, as in challenging learners to focus on the quality of their work they also focus on the learning intentions and success criteria of the subject. Such an outcome helps to explain why I also hold merit in the theory of Expectancy-Value (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Expectancy-Value attempts to explain why and how people in general, and students in particular choose, perform, and persist at a task. It is useful in explaining the impact on the individual's belief about how well they achieve within a given activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Rutkowski & Wild, 2015), and one that links in neatly with Biggs and Tang's (2007), Constructive Alignment [CA] theory. I have found that Biggs and Tang's application of Expectancy-Value theory to their CA extremely useful as it mirrors the importance placed on engaging students in the whole process of learning.

The particular value I see as an educator is that I am able to show my students that I believe they each have the ability to achieve desired outcomes, whilst highlighting how powerful the messages implicit within a lecturer's feedback are, in terms of the influence such messages have on a student's self-belief.

I credit the process of keeping a reflective journal, which enables me to situate myself within the learning process, as alerting me to an issue with feedback. An issue I was able to determine that arose from having many peers across different campuses teaching into this subject. With all marking of the major assessment completed online, using CRA, some assessors were found to be writing copious amounts of personalised feedback alongside the CRA rubric. An outcome I consider as not only an arduous and repetitive process but one that undermines work undertaken throughout the semester on alerting students to the cyclic nature of CA. Concerned that the assessors' good intentions were damaging initial attempts to have students demonstrate self-directed and internal motivations, as it reduces the need for them to challenge their learning outcomes against learning intentions and success criteria, I knew I needed to intervene.

While comfortable in continuing to develop as a strong and reflective practitioner, I was appreciative of the opportunity to engage with Kristina and Dona in a collaborative autoethnographic study. I relished the opportunity as they are peers who both teach and research in education departments. By engaging with them as critical peers, I believed I was situating myself in an environment where I could have my ideas, interpretations, and practices challenged by peers who understood how the theories I espouse could logically link to my analysis of deeper level experiences. I could also be more confident of any unconscious bias being exposed. Overall, I was very pleased to have the opportunity to share ideas with teachers in the field of education and have my experiences critically evaluated.

### **Kristina's Reflective Positioning**

My approach to teaching developed through a belief that students need to be the catalyst, or driving force, in their learning. I consider that the role of the educator is to facilitate motivationally supportive learning environments. Which I further believe empowers students to direct their own learning. The pre-service teachers [PST] in this study are in their first year of an undergraduate Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree. As their lecturer, I work to develop a motivationally supportive approach.

My views are framed by Self Determination Theory (SDT) and Dweck's (2006), research on growth mindset in students. They stem from research I have undertaken in relation to SDT, research that has repeatedly demonstrated to me the power of motivation to move people to action, and to consider what energises and gives direction to their behaviour, as discussed by Ryan and Deci (2017). I am comfortable that SDT identifies three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness which, when satisfied, allow for optimal human functioning, wellbeing and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

- Autonomy refers to students' need to self-regulate their experiences, to be the causal agent of their own actions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). While autonomous learning environments allow students to generate their own learning intentions (Deci & Ryan, 2016; Reeve, 2016).
- Competence relates to the students' need to seek out optimal challenges, to take them on, and exert persistent effort and strategic thinking to progress toward mastering them (Reeve, 2016). Competence supportive pedagogy provides students with experiences that assist them in attaining mastery in their learning (Niemic & Ryan, 2009), scaffolding tasks to help feelings of efficacy emerge (Ryan & Deci, 2013).
- Relatedness refers to the need to be involved in warm relationships characterised by mutual concern, liking, caring and acceptance (Reeve, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

I, like many researchers discussing motivation, use SDT as a framework to examine the interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Which I believe, differ in the following ways.

Intrinsic motivation relates to an individual's inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges them to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and learn (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It describes an individual's natural inclination toward assimilation, mastery, spontaneous interest, and exploration (Ryan, 1995). The maintenance and enhancement of intrinsic motivation requires supportive conditions as non-supportive conditions can readily disrupt an individual's intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In turn, extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity to attain a separable outcome, in contrast with intrinsic motivation. Extrinsically motivated behaviours vary in the extent to which their regulation is autonomous. Extrinsically motivated behaviours that are least autonomous are referred to as externally regulated, such behaviours

are performed to satisfy an external demand or reward contingency (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation, which occurs when identified regulations have been evaluated, brought into congruence with an individual's other values and needs and are fully assimilated to the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Overall, I consider STD provides the foundation to my theory of learning. I see a strong consideration in it in the framing of my view of assessment rubrics, and in line with the work of Dweck (2006) whose research identifies two types of student mindsets, I too am comfortable with the categorisation of fixed or growth mindsets.

With fixed mindsets demonstrating as inhibited, or lacking motivation and evident in students who believe their intelligence is fixed. Fixed to the extent that they avoid challenges, give up easily, do not explore topics in depth, are not disposed to engage in critical thinking, and are low on self-accountability and self-assessment strategies (Dweck, 2006).

In contrast students with a growth mindset seek learning, strive for honest assessment of their weaknesses so that they be remedied, see failure as opportunity for improvement, learn from feedback provided, embrace challenges and are persistent in their learning, believing that effort will lead to success (Dweck, 2006).

Alert to the criticism of Dweck's mindset work, from those unable to achieve similar results, I see that as Dweck herself points out, her research occurred repeatedly within particular conditions where the focus for success was spread across the entirety of policies and practices. Highlighting that to achieve success students need an environment where classroom methods, and grading policies are integrated within growth mindset language.

In my determination to support my PST to develop an understanding of the power of growth mindsets I immerse them in just such an environment. Where we use regular reflections of our actions to highlight practices and outcomes that support or hinder progress. Then after particular practices are defined learners use them to seek objective feedback from, what we call 'skilled-others', which reduces tendencies in learners to overestimate personal competence, an effect known as the 'Dunning Kruger effect' (Dunning, 2011), which assists them to develop an awareness that a growth mindset requires more of a journey than a declaration.

In the process we build a shared value of metacognitive strategies such as reflection, which when explored in context is found as integral. Indeed, I rely heavily on reflective notes when teaching. The process of critical reflection assists me to build supportive environments for PST to share insights and track feelings. My reflective journal also provides me opportunity to collect evidence of strategies that work or need to be highlighted for further consideration. For example, at times my reflections may highlight a need to assist those that are obsessing over effort. Those placing value on hard work as a condition for success in learning. Which in turn ensures I do not miss the timely opportunity to alert them to the point that it takes more than effort alone to move to a growth mindset.

I also encourage my students to build reflective notes and to use them as value records of successes and failures, as they position PST to identify aspects of fixed mindset for re-examination via a growth mindset lens. Which in turn assists learners to overcome limitations and allows them to get on with learning.

After engaging in discussions with Kate and Dona on CRA, and learning that they had recently and jointly supervised a Masters thesis, that had at its foundation 'growth mindset' work, we saw a unique opportunity. Employing the collaborative autoethnography approach with Kate and Dona as my 'skilled-others' meant I could experience the model that I expected from my PST, using 'skilled-others' to challenge my considerations, share insights, expose interpretations and contest claimed successes. In return I believed I could share and extend my own knowledge by assisting them in their autoethnographic journeys.

### **Dona's Reflective Positioning**

The PSTs I work with in relation to this study work in an education subject based on understanding the principles of Curriculum and Assessment. My approach to assessment is underpinned by constructive alignment [CA]. As I see that in using CA principles educators can demonstrably present high standards of teaching and learning whilst offering transparent accountability for both the teacher and the learner. Indeed, I believe CA is useful in teacher education as it offers a systemic theory of a whole of system approach, wherein all stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to the outcome (Brabrand, 2008). I value CA assessments as I believe they support high-level learning, where learners can engage in learning processes designed to optimize educative conditions for quality learning (Biggs, 2003b).

In direct relation to assessment, I am aware that many people see Constructive Alignment [CA] as nothing more than a home for CRA, or a process that simply aligns the assessment to the objectives. However, I see CA as much more than that.

My knowledge of CA was primarily shaped by the team of educators at Alverno College, Milwaukee WI, and via extensive engagement on CA research by researchers such as Biggs (2003, 2009), Brabrand (2008), Reaburn, Muldoon and Brookallil (2009). Briefly, I see that CA presents as a process whereby the objectives, initially in terms of Intended Learning Outcomes [ILO] define the assessment task, which assists student learning by aligning teaching methods with ILO as well as with the assessment tasks. My understanding is that CA is a system of teaching aimed at supporting learning, where the emphasis is on process rather than content. That said, the area of my focus in this paper is specifically on how well I work in highlighting to my PST how the criterion-referencing of an assessment rubric offers them a way to develop their understanding of CA via the unpacking of CRA.

The work relates specifically to how I draw PST attention to understanding what they can learn from comprehending how grades are awarded. I do this to assist my first-year PST in building an insight into CA and CRA as it is a system of teaching used across the university to support learning, and an underpinning element of curriculum that is commonly used as a foundational element in many Australian school settings.

I introduce this work via interaction designed to support PST to discovering for themselves points such as, it's not the length of the answer that gets the score it's the depth. For just as the 'constructive' element in CA suggests, I consider it to be the learner's role in the learning process to construct the understandings for themselves. To learn that knowledge is not something that is transmitted by the teacher, rather learners need to create their own understandings, and in the process further value teaching as a catalyst for learning (Biggs, 2003a). We also explore the second element in CA, alignment, which highlights the teacher's role in creating the learning environment to support students' learning through devised learning activities and careful design of assessment procedures. The learning cycle studied here requires me to place the PST into the introspective teacher role. It relies on me creating quality opportunities for them to transform and be motivated toward becoming what Chang (2008) describes as a coalition of building agents.

My focus is on monitoring the outcomes on PST as they construct their learning through an exploration of teaching experiences. My work is underpinned by my own reflections, collected in a reflective journal. Where I consider in some detail how well particular experiences or activities that I offer, directly support the achievement of set learning outcomes and impact on PST interpretation of the learning environment and their role within it.

As a seasoned user of reflective practice, I was confident in creating a strong account of the impact of my support outcomes, for example on PST as we explore questions around

what it takes to pass the subject, how to get a higher grade. Or the outcomes of exploring criteria, in terms of its impact on educational outcomes. Then as a researcher, I am also confident in creating a study to demonstrate the outcomes of such engagement. One that would consider, what worked, what needed attention, how PST developed their understandings around reading and interpreting the level of expected performance required at differing achievement standards, and so on. However, as a teacher researcher, I was not so confident in my own ability to present an introspective analysis of the impact of my role, at a standard of high enough quality to address the needs inherent in an autoethnographic study. The opportunity to step into the space of autoethnography via a collaborative route, with Kate and Kristina was a perfect for me.

In engaging collaboratively, sharing knowledge, challenging assumptions I felt that together we could facilitate my ability to talk about my engagement with key aspects of high-level tasks. That I could deepen my understandings of why I work the way I do and find ways to work smarter at ensuring the PST were indeed addressing claims I made about their teaching and learning. The opportunity to share interpretations of episodes of success or points where processes are questioned, with Kate and Kristina would I believe assist my confidence in espousing if my beliefs and actions are well aligned and in line with the pedagogy. Overall, it would set me up very well to venture into an autoethnographic study in the future.

My study, therefore, has been designed to explore the outcomes of engaging PST in a consideration of what CRA offers them as learners and in return as future teachers. I want to explore if my teaching methods enable PST to see that CRA demonstrates much of what is valued in the educative process. How well I alert them to seeing early in the subject what the standards for learner achievement offer them and if they use such knowledge within their overall assessment process to value the inherent feedback mechanisms within CRA.

In bringing the work shared at our first meeting together. We were buoyed by our approaches and our honesty. We discussed and challenged individual and shared goals, considered where we had positioned ourselves philosophically, determined if we had addressed our motivations, considered if we were clear in what we were accepting as evidence of growth, and were able to challenge any points of potential bias in interpretations or actions.

## **Interpretation, Elucidation**

Following is an account from each author on how we met our individual aim.

### **Kate's Elucidation**

A key aspect of my introductory accounting unit was to assist the assessors marking my assignment to place greater value on the design of CRA. And to ensure that assessors and students valued as meaningful the feedback and learning opportunities inherent in the overall design.

My journal entries demonstrated that the assessors felt well supported to develop their professional skills. Although as an example, my journal entries highlighted that I needed to bring more attention to what was expected to be demonstrated as foundation knowledge for students in accounting. As an outcome of collaboration highlighted, I needed to share in more detail how the assessment rubric criteria highlight specific aspects of student understandings of basic accounting principles and theory. I was able to work to better situate such knowledge requirements in terms of its importance in future accounting units. Another outcome from

communicating personal awareness with Kristina and Dona was that I found a value in spending more time focussed on typical student errors, as such a consideration assisted my students to demonstrate with greater competence an ability to see how an alignment of errors and marking criteria impacted grades. Within the moderation of marking sessions with peers, as conducted before and after each assessment, I was pleased to hear that the assessors were impressed with how well the student work aligned to criteria markers, and how efficient and easy it was to link student answers to criteria in a way that they now knew as meaningful to the students.

Within these moderation sessions assessors shared their successes in marking outcomes, whilst in class, the students also had opportunity to link their assessment mark to the criteria, which in turn enabled to understand why they received the grade, how to read the outcomes in terms of where and how to improve that grade in future subject assessments.

Overall, the focus on how well I was able to focus attention on where and how to maximise my teaching opportunities, to educate both my students and assessors on how to read the and use feedback inherent in CRA, was proving valuable.

### **Kristina's Elucidation**

To optimise student motivation through the use of an assessment rubric I knew I needed to frame the feedback offered within the rubric criteria as a way of providing important information for the PST on their journey of self-improvement. In jointly exploring my practices, as examined in my reflective journal, I built my confidence about how well I engaged the PST with the assessment rubric in class. For example, when the assignment was first introduced it was contextualised within small groups of PSTs examining and discussing the criteria, working to clarify, elucidate and elaborate on the differences between fail, pass, credit, distinction, high-distinction for each assessment criteria.

In exploring with Kate and Dona my ability to engage PST in using criteria as an autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, we had opportunity to discuss regulation. Which occurs when identified regulations have been evaluated, brought into congruence with an individual's other values and needs, and then fully assimilated to the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The opportunity enabled me to focus an exploration on PST behaviours as characterised by integrated motivation. Which enabled me to see how they shared accounts of intrinsic as extrinsic motivation, exposing how, they often believed they offered separable outcomes rather than being done for their inherent enjoyment, as discussed by Ryan and Deci (2000). Collaboration and further reflection, assisted me in adding depth to the students' understanding of the assessment intent and therefore provided further assessment exemplars accompanied with criteria rubrics for PST to discuss, assess and moderate in groups. This critical assessment and justification of grades was especially valuable within an initial teacher education course as it added value to accurate marking and moderation processes.

Overall, in having the benefit of critical peers I was able to see a point to add emphasis, for PST engaged in unpacking how a rubric articulates a progression of increasingly complex knowledge, skills and concepts. I therefore developed a greater understanding of my PST needs and enhanced my ability to identify optimal times to incorporate their involvement in learning for self-improvement. The discussions Kate, Dona and I shared on how and when to introduce a competence-based continuum, so PST could work autonomously, identify the skills or knowledge needed to improve the quality of their work and regulate personal learning experiences was valuable to each of us.

### **Dona's Elucidation**

As I work in teacher education, I try to use every classroom engagement as a teaching/learning opportunity. For example, in unpacking different assessments we were offered a basis to contextualise how CRA does not seek to compare student outcomes but to find what each student knows and is able to do.

In exploring my classroom reflections with Kate and Kristina I found support in claiming the PST and I were able to recognise measurable goals of an individual's achievement. I was further encouraged to spend more time exploring and reflecting on the significance of the CRA theme within the Australian education system. It was an outcome that enabled me to work with my PST to further unpack how student learning is placed at the forefront of design. Which in turn enabled me to introduce in context the value of large-scale CRA.

Through collaborative deliberation I was encouraged to bring forward a focussed discussion on the premise that it was important for students to take responsibility for their own learning and we did this in a session based on them adding greater value to working together to achieve optimal outcomes. Such work assisted me to better articulate how success criteria can be used to demonstrate improved outcomes in achievement and learning behaviour. The work engaged the students in writing what they considered appropriate criterion, and quickly moved beyond sharing objectives to one where we created student friendly terminology, representative of academic need. We unpacked commonalities, for example, explored if the aim of the criteria was to make a summative evaluation of performance or was it a tool to help clarify instructional goals? And found that in deliberating on how to use a rubric to transform student outcomes, we first needed to explore how clear criteria enable rubrics to provide formative markers of acceptable performance.

Within such a work environment PST found opportunity to evaluate personal progress and to evaluate overall achievement. But just as importantly The strategic reflective analysis assisted me to help students build into the program opportunity to interpret, within a classroom context, how our behaviour as educators enables us to use rubrics to provide feedback and promote improvement. We did this work by sharing and reflecting on how to design criteria that captures the main skills, knowledge and understanding implicit in our assessment task. Where in working as an introspective community to build descriptors representative of an acceptable level of performance and by creating samples of exemplar outcomes, we were able to build our own criteria demonstrative of the outcomes desired in an assessment task and relevant to the very subject being taught.

In having the experience documented I believe I was well placed to enhance the next iteration of the subject. I had strong evidence of what PST agreed as acceptable, via personally recorded discussions on the level of performance, and a stronger awareness of how to best situate such expectations within class time and how to have it best reflected in the rubric. Having PST share in explorations of how difficult quality rubrics were to design meant that within the design process there was a genuine opportunity to include terminology that provided them clear indicators of what constitutes acceptable outcomes. Aligned with appropriate opportunity to identify the skills, knowledge and understanding that the assessment aimed to demonstrate.

Following is a discussion on what we three authors found in terms of our joint aim, which was to have each cohort find a greater value in the feedback inherent in CRA.

## **Discussion - Transformation of practice outcomes**

Our three different voices come together here to show how we influenced each other and explored practice outcome implications.

### **Kate's Targeted Outcomes**

My participation in this study was based on monitoring how well I addressed a challenge around ensuring students receive feedback that encourages them, via self-directed and internal motivations, to challenge their learning outcomes against learning intentions and success criteria. An important factor as it demonstrates a degree of mastery which is integral in building confidence in a student's ability, and a belief that they will succeed in both the short and long term, as discussed by Ajzen (1991).

In being able to share my journey with Kristina and Dona I found I was able to focus on successes, such as reducing feedback overload, which was not only arduous for the assessors and more importantly, detrimental to the structure of the subject. Now the assessment turnaround is more efficient students are encouraged to engage as designed in the assessment process, adding relevance to the subject design.

Overall, I found I progressed well toward the objective which was to engage with Kristina and Dona in ways that challenged my assertions of how I impacted classroom participants, which includes the assessors, to better understand and value the feedback inherent in CRA.

For future action, thanks to the work undertaken, I consider I have a much stronger self-awareness of why I react the way I do to challenges, in terms of where I draw strength, what I value, and why I give weight to particular strategies over others.

### **Kristina's Targeted Outcomes**

Through autoethnographic reflection and in particular a focussed analysis of the theme of criterion referenced assessment, I feel stronger about espousing the basis of my professional practice. Working with Kate and Dona has supported me in the development of my confidence in regard to being able to discuss how I perceive and address challenges in my teaching.

In providing activities around the assessment, which PST perceive as interesting and enjoyable, I have greater confidence to support PST motivation toward assessment and provide them opportunities for self-improvement as they examine and discuss criteria.

Overall, I believe that through sharing outcomes with Kate and Dona I see that I am able to support PST motivation and build growth mindsets by providing authentic opportunities to address PST needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness.

I believe I am also well placed to challenge PST in their perceptions of classroom activities, especially in relation to the value and use of 'skilled-others', as this journey has given me new insights into the benefits of exposing interpretations and contesting claimed successes. I look forward to building future action plans designed to provide me with fresh insights into the creation of growth mindset environments.

**Dona's Targeted Outcomes:**

The time we spent as a group of three going through the process of exploring and reflecting on our teaching activities, our pedagogy, proved to be of great personal value. In unpacking pedagogical practices around assessment requirements with Kate and Kristina, I felt supported as I strengthened my understandings of how best to assist PST to develop strong understandings of how assessment knowledge is useful in building topic as well as pedagogical knowledge.

Through working together, I felt supported to refine terminology around how to make assessment expectations explicit. And assisted in building PST regard and understanding of the assessment process.

As the three of us built an understanding of how to best interpret expectations, I found value in reflecting on the ways in which I was negotiating, clarifying understandings, and setting out future actions. The implicit learning is difficult to quantify, however, I do feel in a stronger position to undertake an autoethnographic study. Of course, I have now found the collaborative autoethnographic approach has much to recommend it.

Next, we offer a summary of findings in which we demonstrate how the findings contribute further to the field of study.

**Conclusion**

Working as a group of three in a collaborative autoethnographic study, allowed us to articulate, share and challenge each other's reflections and assumptions. The outcome was in many ways transformational in terms of enhancing personal knowledge and teaching practice. We consider that our greatest asset in engaging with this process was that we had complete trust in each other as experts in our fields. It was this trust that started the conversation and encouraged us to work together. We were open in sharing issues we wanted addressed in our own areas of teaching and it was in these discussions that we found an area, CRA, we knew we could each benefit from focussing on.

We encourage readers of our paper to find colleagues they too trust. To have honest discussions and find an area of comparable focus within their practice. Then to trial as we did collaborative autoethnography. For in examining orientations, unpacking ways to support each other to build greater autonomy, competence, relatedness, and motivation, we believe there will be a growing awareness of each participant's introspective ability. We also see that working together greatly assisted us in ensuring we positioned ourselves correctly in relation to the research.

Our work benefited greatly from opportunities to share our teaching insights and experiences, which enabled us to build a greater valuing of our own teaching. Through the process of engaging in a collaborative autoethnography study, we feel better placed to engage with the personal experiences within our own context as teachers, better equipped to provide an account of how we acquired our understandings, and well positioned to decide where we next plan to explore and strengthen our knowledge bank. There are great benefits to be had from sharing honest accounts of professional practice with peers.

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