Summary Notes: Session 5 – Workshop 3B

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<u>Strategies for evaluating student learning</u>

Traditional Evaluations – useful, but too global to give information about increasing learning. Most of what we do requires multiple skills. If a student doesn't do well, why not? Take problems with essay writing for example: is the problem is it writing ability? Use of evidence? Argumentation? An essay is a big task. Can we break it down? Also, feedback often comes too late for improvement.

<u>Two initiatives</u>

-IU Freshman learning project. "Decoding the Disciplines". Seven steps (see PPT or handout). Steps:

- Where are there bottlenecks to learning. Where are there failures? What bothers you in a class? What isn't working?
- What has to be done to past the bottleneck? Participants sent into classes in a field they know nothing about. Much of what historians do are not universal human activities. E.g., "reading": what does reading mean? Professional historians read "selectively" – focus on "important parts". But how do we define / unpack these terms?
- Explicitly model skill for students.
- Give students an opportunity to practice
- Motivate students – students don't work and don't do well, BUT students also don't do well so they don't work.
- How do I assess whether students have mastered these operations
- Share what you have learned

Lendol asks: can this be done as a classroom activity? Can students identify their own bottlenecks, and then have other students help them get past them?

David answers: This entire process works best if you (the instructors) work in a group, if you can run ideas past one another and discuss what works and what doesn't.

Video: Ancient historian identifies a bottleneck – students not understanding what an argument is in an article (or what an article is).

Defining what a historian does – bottleneck of working with visual sources. Replicate the conversation of the six people sitting in a Washington office designing the Rosie the Riveter poster. Humans make primary sources, they don't drop from the sky. Students do not understand that sources are things that people made. Students don't realise that they are supposed to come up with questions, not answers, about posters.

Bottlenecks identified by participants:

- Reading scholarly articles – ask students why they are readings something? What is the article about? What position does the author take? What evidence supports or negates this argument (tying sources together)? John Bean – What is it saying? What is it doing?

Decoding Assessment (step 6 – how can I tell whether students have mastered these operations by the end of the process?)

Angelo and Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*.

- Minute papers
- Muddiest point
- One sentence summary
- Directed paraphrasing
- Word journal

Another possible assignment: Write a letter to a friend on how to succeed in this class.

Or have student answer the question: Has your thinking about history changed during this semester? "I used to think…" and "Now I think…" (Maybe do the former at the beginning of the semester and the other at the end.)

Other assignments presented:

- Drawing picture of Beowulf assignment.
- Prezi.com presentations as student group projects.

Student exit interviews.

Group work. Students do reading. Come in to class and they take a multiple choice quiz individually, then they take it as a group. Each is worth half. (Perhaps rate confidence at the same time).

Common bottlenecks in history:

- Reading
- Selective reading, esp. at the lower levels. Have students identify what is important and what isn't in a paragraph.
- Argument and what an argument is. William Perry, stages of learning.
- Evidence.
- Nature of history.

Time. Do we assign too many big papers? Is so, how do we let them practice. Do short assignments that do specific things that you are trying to accomplish, then assign less long-form writing.

Not all bottlenecks are cognitive. Others can be related to identity, empathy, etc.