Transnational Teaching
Quick Guide

> " *A little learning is a dangerous thing.*
>
> *Alexander Pope* "

Deep & surface learning

Marton and Saljo (1976) examined learning patterns of students and identified two key approaches: deep and surface learning. Deep learning is the type of learning that sees students reflecting on their learning, applying it to real life experiences, making connections and analysing and evaluating concepts. Surface learning is related to rote learning, which suggests memorizing facts for exams and passively receiving information. Surface learners do not necessarily relate new knowledge to real life.

It is acknowledged that learners use both types of learning. Learners should not necessarily be categorized in one group or the other:

> "Deep and surface learning approaches are used by students depending on their perception of the task being completed. Students may, in fact, swap from one approach to another according to the demands of the task." (Wee, Sep 8 2010).

RMIT University promotes engaging students in deep learning. Your role as a teacher is to guide students through meaningful learning experiences that enhance their professional lives.

As a transnational teacher, you must consider how you might develop students as deep learners.

Strategies to develop deep learning

There are a number of strategies academic and teaching staff can adopt to develop deep learners:

- Actively involving students in their learning and assessment and allowing them to make choices and provide input. Consider how you could allow students to make choices about learning and assessment activities so that the activity is more relevant to them.

- Engaging students through structured activities that are relevant to the course and are localised to take into account issues and problems that are real and meaningful. It is important to ensure students understand the holistic nature of what they are learning and how it fits into the big picture. Where possible use actual and contextualised cases and examples so students can see the relevance of the subject matter.

- Engaging students in reflection and reflective writing that personalises their learning. You could ask students to keep a blog or journal on their learning journey so that they are able to reflect on how they changed over time. This is particularly useful when they take part in group

activities as you can see how each student has synthesised the learning experience.

- Providing a supportive environment where students are not fearful of making mistakes and where they learn from their peers as well as from you. One of the most important requirements of teaching is to construct a safe learning environment where students are happy to take risks in their learning. Students may quickly lose motivation if they fear embarrassment or punishment.

- Demonstrating a passion for the subject and encouraging students to do the same.

- Designing integrated assessments which allow students to bring together key concepts from different subject areas or areas of interest.

- If you are involved in the design of assessment activities, design tasks that encourage students to solve problems and to integrate new knowledge using existing knowledge. Find ways to assist students put the new knowledge into context. Wee (2010) suggests that students should have the opportunity for group involvement, discussion, and reflection with their peers for assessment purposes.

Supporting transnational students

Cultural differences amongst students must be accommodated. You can assist students who might be more familiar with surface learning to transition to deep learning by:

- Creating a supportive environment and allowing time for students to adapt to deep learning activities.

- Introducing reflective writing with support from academics and teacher and fellow students.

- Using group learning rather than individual competition in learning tasks.

What actually enhances deep learning?

Research and practice indicates that the required elements to enhance deep learning include:

- Active student involvement in course concepts and ideas

- Interest in the subject by both students and teachers

- Possession of sound background knowledge and skills

- Ability to make connections and links

- Ability to reflect on one's own learning

- Well constructed and thought provoking assessment tasks

- Reflective analysis of learning and assessments

- Positive and supportive learning environments which allow students to explore new concepts and new knowledge without fear of failure.

Useful resources

Support is available from your Deputy Head of School (Learning & Teaching) or equivalent. Your College Academic Development Group or learning & teaching specialist can also provide advice, support and professional development.

RMIT University's Practical Guide to Teaching will help your plan and improve your teaching practice:
http://www.rmit.edu.au/teaching/practical

Baeten, M, Kyndt, E, Struyven, K & Dochy, F 2010, 'Using student-centred learning environments to stimulate deep approaches to learning: factors encouraging or discouraging their effectiveness', *Press Educational Research Review 2010.*
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2010.06.001

Getting Smart Blog Series - Leading for Deeper Learning: 10 Proven Strategies
http://gettingsmart.com/2013/08/leading-for-deeper-learning-10-proven-strategies/

Phelps, R & Ellis, A 2003, 'From page turning to deep learning: a case history of four years of continual development of an ICT course', in G Crisp, D Thiele, I Scholten, S Barker & J Baron (eds), I*nteract, integrate, impact: proceedings of the 20th Annual Conference of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education*, Adelaide, SA, 7-10 December, Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education, Wollongong, NSW, pp. 407-414.
http://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=educ_pubs

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