

**Emails Expert-Instructors September 19, 2017- November 28, 2017**

**Da:** Aiste Ptakauske||Pasaulio virtuvė|The Ethnic Kitchen [<mailto:info@pasauliovirtuve.org>]   
**Inviato:** martedì 28 novembre 2017 18:46  
**A:** [hugo.verkest@vives.be](mailto:hugo.verkest@vives.be); Sandra Chistolini; [jmickute@gmail.com](mailto:jmickute@gmail.com); [virginija.bortkeviciene@vdu.lt](mailto:virginija.bortkeviciene@vdu.lt); Giedrė Tamoliūnė; Vaida Jurgilė; Ineke De Coninck; Paola Supino  
**Oggetto:** videos of Simon's workshop in Galway

Dear Partners,  
Simon has kindly sent me a video of the workshop on Decoding the Disciplines that he delivered in Galway on July 1. You may download the video from here: [https://wetransfer.com/downloads/25cf87e705381f2e1bca55ffa42fd30a20171128151157/feb98da3f4f5fb5822b61d822944fb5d20171128151157/b07c7d  
T](https://wetransfer.com/downloads/25cf87e705381f2e1bca55ffa42fd30a20171128151157/feb98da3f4f5fb5822b61d822944fb5d20171128151157/b07c7d" \t "_blank)he video will be available for your download for 7 days.   
Please, use it only for your own reference. Do not share.  
I will soon be sharing with you self-assessment forms that you'll have to fill in and return to me by December 20. They will be included into our final report as specified in the application.  
In the meantime, I hope your research is coming along well. I'm in touch with the experts so I'm informed about the progress you're making. But I'm always happy to hear from you directly too.  
Talk to you soon!

Sincerely,  
--

AISTE PTAKAUSKE  
Published Author, Scriptwriter, Producer, Coach  
[PASAULIO VIRTUVĖ](http://www.pasauliovirtuve.org" \t "_blank)  
jaudinančios istorijos  
[THE ETHNIC KITCHEN](http://www.pasauliovirtuve.org/en/" \t "_blank)  
Touching Stories

November 28, 2017

We may be losing something in translation.

When we talked, and when I produced an initial bottleneck paragraph, the focus was on strategies for including students who could not attend class.  That is why we looked at Poala's situation

* Paola discussed how students often came up to her after the lesson asking additional questions about the content of the lesson
* This seemed a good focus for thinking about how to include those who cannot attend class
* The strategy could then be to post those questions and answers on the website
* This would be good for ALL students

I wrote the first draft paragraph to show you what was expected.  You should now re-write this so that it is more specific.

Does that make sense?

I am having difficulties organising the multiplayer event.  The original partner had to pull out so I am negotiating with new partners.  It will be late January or early February before anything is organised.

Simon

We may be losing something in translation.

When we talked, and when I produced an initial bottleneck paragraph, the focus was on strategies for including students who could not attend class.  That is why we looked at Poala's situation

* Paola discussed how students often came up to her after the lesson asking additional questions about the content of the lesson
* This seemed a good focus for thinking about how to include those who cannot attend class
* The strategy could then be to post those questions and answers on the website
* This would be good for ALL students

I wrote the first draft paragraph to show you what was expected.  You should now re-write this so that it is more specific.

Does that make sense?

I am having difficulties organising the multiplayer event.  The original partner had to pull out so I am negotiating with new partners.  It will be late January or early February before anything is organised.

Simon

**From:** Sandra Chistolini <[sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it](mailto:sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it)>  
**Sent:** 21 November 2017 17:32:15  
**To:** Warren, Simon  
**Cc:** Paola Supino  
**Subject:** Bottlenecks in details

Hi Simon,

I get confused.

You sent the definition of the bottleneck:

“Draft

A large proportion of students are not able to attend classes because a) many live outside Rome and they and their families cannot afford to rent or buy accommodation in Rome, and b) many have to work to sustain themselves and their families economically, c) they mature the prejudice, they assume that they do not need to attend the class because study at home would allow them to pass the exam even though receiving low marks, the right to learn new knowledge is not in their mind. This indicates that economic and cultural disadvantage is/are an issue/s that prevents many students from fully engaging in their studies.  Hidden within this is the situation of migrant students who are often also economically disadvantaged or culturally marginalised.  These students do not have the same quality of educational experience as those who can attend the classes and are not able to benefit from ordinary interactive methodology explain in class and additional guidance from instructors that often happens in class”.

We were working on this draft and we proposed how to help students.

Paola in inviting students outside the class.

Sandra is giving suggestion by email, promoting interaction in class (students ask questions, dialogue) and using skype meeting allowing students to participate. It means to introduce the logic of interactive learning and renovation of topics in pedagogy, students are also learning to enter into the discipline by guided curriculum with questions related to books and topics.

In my case bottleneck in detail is: students need confidence in contacting the teacher, instead of frustration to be excluded they want to be in the course in a different way and they learn they right to ask explanation and meaning of what teacher is proposing. Exclusion is part of previous roots, secondary school, and part of traditional way of academic learning. Students are encouraged:  1) to trust teacher asking questions; 2) to exercise their rights in education; 3) to develop alternative options to help their academic success; 4) to open the door of knowledge; 5) to act as active learners; 6) to adopt interactive methodology (dialogue, questions, explanations, comments).

Interaction not important in their previous experience in school is now accepted as added value of learning.

Examples

- in class student are far away from teacher: students sit in the back row and do not see teacher's eyes;

- outside the class student are far away from teacher:  student do not attend the lesson and they do not bother to ask for additional knowledge.

Are this the details you are expecting? Taking for instance the point concerning learning new knowledge. Do you want us to define new knowledge or do you want us to provide for what kind of interaction was useful to give students the awareness of their economic and cultural disadvantages. There are two levels: 1) contents 2) methodology. I am working on both: building autonomous concept of Education and making communication a mean to develop independence of judgement. Issues are interrelated.

I thank you very much.

Sandra

**Da:** Warren, Simon [<mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie>]   
**Inviato:** sabato 18 novembre 2017 14:50  
**A:** Sandra Chistolini  
**Cc:** Paola Supino  
**Oggetto:** Re: R: Second skype meeting

My understanding from our discussions is that we were not going to do this this term, but after Christmas. On 10 November I guided you to focus on just one or two daily classes. See my email. I hoped that the two of you would decide the detail - though we have an initial bottleneck, it is still too broad. It needs to be more specific. For instance, using the example provided by Paola, how would you define the bottleneck?

If we do not have a useful bottleneck then we can't design an activity or collect useful information

Get [Outlook for Android](https://aka.ms/ghei36)

From: Sandra Chistolini

Sent: Thursday, 16 November, 9:19 a.m.

Subject: R: Second skype meeting

To: Warren, Simon

Cc: Paola Supino

Dear Simon,

next week will be the last opportunity we have to use Decoding methodology in our class. We urgently need to define the necessary steps to develop our activity.

What are your suggestions about our second skype meeting?

We thank you very much for your kind co-operation

Keep in touch

Sandra

**Da:** Sandra Chistolini

**Inviato:** venerdì 10 novembre 2017 13:10

**A:** 'Warren, Simon'; Paola Supino

**Oggetto:** Second skype meeting

Dear Simon,

I am using the web site to include the students who cannot attend the lessons. The question is how to know they are following in this distance learning. We need the tool to create active interaction. Shall we have the skype meeting?

Keep in touch

Sandra

**Da:** Warren, Simon [<mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie>]

**Inviato:** venerdì 10 novembre 2017 12:20

**A:** Paola Supino; Sandra Chistolini

**Oggetto:** Re: REPORT ON SKYPE MEETING

Thinking of this very practically, I think you should focus on one or two daily lessons.  Then ask yourself what could be done on Moodle to assist those students who cannot attend classes.  I liked Paola's description of how students come to her after lessons with questions.  When we discussed this on Skype I suggested that maybe she could post the questions on Moodle with her answers.  that was a very practical way of supporting students who cannot attend.

Does that help?

[http://worriedteacher.wordpress.com](http://worriedteacher.wordpress.com/)

**From:** Paola Supino <[paola.supino@uniroma3.it](mailto:paola.supino@uniroma3.it)>

**Sent:** 08 November 2017 16:16:19

**To:** Warren, Simon; Sandra Chistolini

**Subject:** Re: REPORT ON SKYPE MEETING

Hi Warren,

thanks for your suggestions. I am not sure I am understanding you:

Ok: I agree that addressing to my moodle platform is still too wide and generic, that is because I was looking at the bottleneck of "not attending the lessons" in a general way..

I can concentrate on a couple of sessions (you mean daily lesson, right?)

Do you mean that I shuold try to focalaize on a couple of lessons and propose to   ALL students someting which flatten the difference between frequenting and not frequenting students?

Concerning the attitude of our students, I 'd like to point out that  non frequenting ones (usually workers) often ask indication or facilities via email, without taking in account to come at university even once before the exam.  After their mail I  usually  propose them to pay a short visit: some of them do not menage any appointment with me.

good evening,

Paola

**Da:** Sandra Chistolini

**Inviato:** venerdì 10 novembre 2017 13:10

**A:** 'Warren, Simon'; Paola Supino

**Oggetto:** Second skype meeting

Dear Simon,

I am using the web site to include the students who cannot attend the lessons. The question is how to know they are following in this distance learning. We need the tool to create active interaction. Shall we have the skype meeting?

Keep in touch

Sandra

**Da:** Warren, Simon [<mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie>]

**Inviato:** venerdì 10 novembre 2017 12:20

**A:** Paola Supino; Sandra Chistolini

**Oggetto:** Re: REPORT ON SKYPE MEETING

Thinking of this very practically, I think you should focus on one or two daily lessons.  Then ask yourself what could be done on Moodle to assist those students who cannot attend classes.  I liked Paola's description of how students come to her after lessons with questions.  When we discussed this on Skype I suggested that maybe she could post the questions on Moodle with her answers.  that was a very practical way of supporting students who cannot attend.

Does that help?

Simon

**From:** Paola Supino <[paola.supino@uniroma3.it](mailto:paola.supino@uniroma3.it)>

**Sent:** 08 November 2017 16:16:19

**To:** Warren, Simon; Sandra Chistolini

**Subject:** Re: REPORT ON SKYPE MEETING

Hi Warren,

thanks for your suggestions. I am not sure I am understanding you:

Ok: I agree that addressing to my moodle platform is still too wide and generic, that is because I was looking at the bottleneck of "not attending the lessons" in a general way..

I can concentrate on a couple of sessions (you mean daily lesson, right?)

Do you mean that I shuold try to focalaize on a couple of lessons and propose to   ALL students someting which flatten the difference between frequenting and not frequenting students?

Concerning the attitude of our students, I 'd like to point out that  non frequenting ones (usually workers) often ask indication or facilities via email, without taking in account to come at university even once before the exam.  After their mail I  usually  propose them to pay a short visit: some of them do not menage any appointment with me.

good evening,

Paola

**Da:** Warren, Simon <[simon.warren@nuigalway.ie](mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie)>  
**Inviato:** mercoledì 8 novembre 2017 13:28  
**A:** Paola Supino; Sandra Chistolini  
**Oggetto:** Re: REPORT ON SKYPE MEETING

Hello Both

Things became very busy last week due to a colleague of mine being ill.  I had to take on extra duties.

Thank you Sandra for the additional points.

If we think back to the training and my earlier emails this year, we looked at how we might write a bottleneck paragraph.  The additional points you raise are important ones.  As I understand them you identify a number of additional issues:

* students are strategic - if they believe they do not need to attend classes in order to pass with a low mark then they will stay away
* keeping student attention in class is difficult because of the long days and long classes - the structural aspect of the course that cannot be changed

These I would see as possible alternative bottleneck areas.  So a decision has to be made about the bottleneck area that you want to and can deal with.

My suggestion is that the two of you think again about the bottleneck we discussed in the Skype meeting that is in the statement below

"This indicates that economic and cultural disadvantage is/are an issue/s that prevents many students from fully engaging in their studies.  Hidden within this is the situation of migrant students who are often also economically disadvantaged or culturally marginalised.  These students do not have the same quality of educational experience as those who can attend the classes and are not able to benefit from ordinary interactive methodology explain in class and additional guidance from instructors that often happens in class."

Then, think about possible strategies that you can both implement.  You have indicated one area that is useful, in my view, to look at more:

"Orient all student to my moodle platform, where I have some material as slides of lessons (not any lesson has slides!) will add a daily agenda of my lessons, with few word addressing to argument treated in class, and some exercise specifically related to the single lesson so that not attending students can plan a schedule and a time sheet of their work. "

You may disagree with me on this.

But, looking at how to orient students to Moodle is still TOO BIG.  Is it possible to think about this in relation to just one or two sessions - what could be practically done to support those students who do not or cannot attend class to access learning through Moodle just for those one or two classes.  Then think about how you communicate this to all students in a way that potentially helps them to have a positive appreciation of the issue of equal access to the course.

Simon

November 2, 2017

Hi Sandra and Warren,

I have read  journal Il nodo of Sandra, her report isvery interesting , but also I have read other articles (i.e.:Bologna experiment in using smart card to register presence of students at university: they have -of course- the same problem of us: students not attending..!)

Skype meeting:

I am available saturday and sunday morning from 8.00-8.30  Italian local time

generally, I would prefer this hour in  any day, thanks

Questions:

1. **Can the two of you look at my draft Bottleneck description and give me feedback?**
2. **Can the two of you think about small areas in your courses where specific actions can be taken?**
3. **Then we can plan our next Skype meeting.**

**My addition in blue. Bottleneck description (Draft)**

**I agree with Sandra, in particular:**

**1.**

A large proportion of students are not able to attend classes because

a) many live outside Rome and they and their families cannot afford to rent or buy accommodation in Rome,

 b) many have to work to sustain themselves and their families economically,

c) they mature the prejudice, they assume that they do not need to attend the class because study at home would allow them to pass the exam even though receiving low marks, the right to learn new knowledge is not in their mind.

This indicates that economic and cultural disadvantage is/are an issue/s that prevents many students from fully engaging in their studies.  Hidden within this is the situation of migrant students who are often also economically disadvantaged or culturally marginalised.  These students do not have the same quality of educational experience as those who can attend the classes and are not able to benefit from ordinary interactive methodology explain in class and additional guidance from instructors that often happens in class.

d) Students are not able /not trained to pay active attention for long time: being sitted and concentrated  the whole daily lessons long is hard. The  lessons are usually scheduled for 4 hours  daily. This cannot be modified .

e) students not attending are very aseptic with my subject and with my person: they come to the exam as to fulfilling a formal duty so that they get surprised in recognising the human aspects of knowledge exchange and hidden (for them) objectives of the subject in the moment in which, during the exam , I speak with them and give them the chance to relate to me personally and to receive personalized suggestions and encouraging  in approaching the subject and the exam.

**2.**

**2.**     **Small areas:**

I cannot ask for compulsory Workshop because compulsory presence in my subject is not programmed by organization of the Course.

b.       Orient all student to my moodle platform, where I have some material as slides of lessons (not any lesson has slides!) will add a daily agenda of my lessons, with few word addressing to argument treated in class, and some exercise specifically related to the single lesson so that not attending students can plan a schedule and a time sheet of their work.

ASkAsk to any not attending student to take an appointment  with  me at least some week  before the exam (or better while startign to prepare for the exam) to meet and make a personal impression of the instructor , and of what are the hidden (for them) objectives that the instructor want them to aim and   will be tested therefore by means of the exam. This would personalize their work and help them to get  out of the stuck  concerning bad relation with the subject (which  is Maths!!)

(hip(Hoping this is clear)

October 29, 2017

Dear Simon,

I answer the 3 questions:

1. **Can the two of you look at my draft Bottleneck description and give me feedback?**
2. **Can the two of you think about small areas in your courses where specific actions can be taken?**
3. **Then we can plan our next Skype meeting.**
4. **My feedback in red. Bottleneck description. Draft**

A large proportion of students are not able to attend classes because a) many live outside Rome and they and their families cannot afford to rent or buy accommodation in Rome, and b) many have to work to sustain themselves and their families economically, c) they mature the prejudice, they assume that they do not need to attend the class because study at home would allow them to pass the exam even though receiving low marks, the right to learn new knowledge is not in their mind. This indicates that economic and cultural disadvantage is/are an issue/s that prevents many students from fully engaging in their studies.  Hidden within this is the situation of migrant students who are often also economically disadvantaged or culturally marginalised.  These students do not have the same quality of educational experience as those who can attend the classes and are not able to benefit from ordinary interactive methodology explain in class and additional guidance from instructors that often happens in class.

1. **Small areas: workshop**

Workshop is compulsory and all student must attend. It covers 8 hours. Specific actions are:

1. Using the workshop to introduce part of the course. But time is too short.
2. Orient all student to my website for additional guidance. I do not know if it would work, in other words do they really go and read the website? The evidence is negative.
3. Orient all student to use the <https://www.academia.edu/> where they find pdf documents to read and also the article about the DDm. I have to think how to have their feedback. Questionnaires?

Sandra Chistolini, *Decoding the Disciplines in Pedagogia. Epistemologia e metodologia della formazione per una buona pratica di preparazione universitaria degli insegnanti*, in “Il Nodo. Per una pedagogia della persona”, anno XXI, n. 47, Nuova Serie, dicembre, 2017, pp. 35-52 ISSN 2280-4374 see pdf enclosed also available in <https://www.academia.edu/>

1. **Waiting to plan Skype meeting asap.**

I thank you very much!  
Best wishes

Sandra

**Da:** Warren, Simon [<mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie>]   
**Inviato:** venerdì 27 ottobre 2017 11:31  
**A:** Sandra Chistolini; Paola Supino  
**Oggetto:** REPORT ON SKYPE MEETING

Hello Both

I am sorry I could not send this yesterday, but I was driving for much of the day.

Below is:

1. Summary of the main points covered in our meeting
2. Initial guidance on the Bottleneck description

**Summary of meeting**

In Thursday's meeting we covered the following points

* We clarified what is meant by 'diversity' in the context of the the DD project - diversity = equality issues, ethnicity/race, gender, social class, refugees, religion, etc.
* We clarified the purpose of the questionnaire you used recently - the questionnaire was used by you to test your hypothesis that inequality of access to the courses you teach is a major issue that could form the basis for your DD work this year.
* We agreed that inequality of access to learning would be the focus for the DD work - a large proportion of students do not access the course directly.
* We agreed that both of you would work on the same bottleneck.
* We agreed that I would produce a first draft of a Bottleneck description and then we would have another Skype meeting to clarify this and plan the next steps.

**Bottleneck - Draft**

A large proportion of students are not able to attend classes because a) many live outside Rome and they and their families cannot afford to rent or buy accommodation in Rome, and b) many have to work to sustain themselves and their families economically.  This indicates that economic disadvantage is an issue that prevents many students from fully engaging in their studies.  Hidden within this is the situation of migrant students who are often also economically disadvantaged.  These students do not have the same quality of educational experience as those who can attend the classes and are not able to benefit from additional guidance from instructors that often happens in class.

Some examples we discussed in our meeting

Above, I have tried to define the bottleneck issue.  But I have not yet tried to define specific areas for action.  Below are two examples we briefly discussed in our meeting.  These are just examples.  But they do indicate small areas of action - we discussed how we have to focus on small areas of action to use the Decoding methodology.  We cannot change the bigger issue of access because that is a structural issue.  For the DD project we have to identify small areas that we can do something about.

1. Paola: you mentioned something really interesting about the kinds of interaction that you often have in class.  You talked about how, at the end of a class, you often get students come to you asking for clarification on something that you covered.  Obviously, those who cannot attend class are not able to participate in these interactions.  We discussed how one response to this could be to post on the website the questions that students bring to you at the end of class, and also provide your guidance.  That way ALL students may be advantaged.  This is a small action.  But you could try to measure its impact for those who cannot attend class.
2. Sandra: we discussed the class you hold where students have to read a theorist then do a presentation.  I asked how those who cannot attend can still participate in this?  We did not discuss any solutions.  And maybe this is not the best example for you to work on.  But it does raise an important are for reflection. If your classes use interactions  (like presentations), what could be done to give those who cannot attend an opportunity to participate? We would need to think and talk about this, and find the right part of your course where this could work.

These are just EXAMPLES.  I will also talk with Jolanta.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. **Can the two of you look at my draft Bottleneck description and give me feedback?**
2. **Can the two of you think about small areas in your courses where specific actions can be taken?**
3. **Then we can plan our next Skype meeting.**

Simon

**Da:** Warren, Simon [<mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie>]   
**Inviato:** mercoledì 25 ottobre 2017 11:14  
**A:** Sandra Chistolini; Paola Supino  
**Oggetto:** Re: Sandra and Paola DD Bottleneck + skype meeting

Sandra and Paola

Thank you for these outline bottlenecks.

I think that they are a good development.  I have two concerns:

1. There are to be 2 or 3 bottlenecks in each of your paragraphs (Paola - mathematical symbols; passage from concrete to abstract; students organising themselves.  Sandra - not understanding meaning of text; passivity of students in lessons; gap between theory/practice; problems of inductive/deductive reasoning).  The DD methodology (nor any methodology) cannot work with so many bottlenecks at the same time.  As we said in the training, you have to focus on small areas that you can really give energy to.  So, these are still starting points for further clarification and decisions on which of these you would work on.
2. **THE MAIN CONCERN IS THAT THESE ARE NOT DIVERSITY BOTTLENECKS**.  As I said in my previous communication, we are now focusing on diversity.  That is what the training was for. So, you have to decide
   1. Are you going to focus on Curriculum and Diversity issues, or Students and Diversity issues.  Please look again at my recent communication with you.
   2. Define SPECIFIC bottlenecks - writing a bottleneck paragraph. IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON ONE BOTTLENECK ISSUE.

I can Skype tomorrow (Thursday) or Friday morning - early.  I am in UK for work and travelling between locations.

Simon

October 23, 2017

Dear Simon,

we went on we the DD methodology using it with our new groups of students. We talked a lot and now we send you our bottlenecks. We will be very pleased to arrange a skype meeting with you asap.

PAOLA

Bottleneck

Students are not familiar with simple math symbols: the sight of a short formula or of a symbolic math sentence get them stuck. Passage from concrete examples to abstract math model is perceived meaningless.

Students do not organize a working timetable for themselves. The request of the instructor to go to find documents on the subject presented in the class and to make the suggestesd exercises dayly in order to fix ideas and be ready  for the next lesson is unattended.

SANDRA

Bottleneck

Students have not idea of operationalization of concepts. Words in a sentence are fully understood but the meaning of what the words are assuming is not immediate and there is not awareness of this failure. Given the methodology of research based on the active interaction, students tend to listen by intellect without acting consequently. Huge separation between theory and practice/practice and theory. Deductive and inductive methods are not in communication.

Keep in touch

Sandra Chistolini

October 8, 2017 Sandra and Paola

I am sending you the Diversity Rubric we briefly looked at in the training session.

This will help you focus on a useful area to define a bottleneck.

Simon

October 8, 2017

Sandra and Paola

Thank you for this.

I have a number of issues with this draft questionnaire:

**What is the bottleneck?**

I do not know what your bottleneck is.  I refer you to the training in the summer where I outlined how David Pace wrote a paragraph trying to define a bottleneck (the notes in slide 2 of my presentation)

"That is why the Decoding methodology asks us to think about BOTTLENECKS in terms of the places in the curriculum where students regularly get stuck, and to think about this not in terms of what the students need to know, but in terms of the mental operations - the ways of thinking and practising.

It asks us not to rush to thinking immediately about teaching techniques.  It asks us to think about teaching techniques AFTER we have carefully analysed the learning problem.

We can usually identify broad areas where students often get stuck.  We can call these broad BOTTLENECK AREAS.  If we stay at the level of these bottleneck areas we might try to tackle too many things at the same time.  This is an extract from David Pace’s “The Decoding the Disciplines Paradigm” book.  It refers to an instructor identifying a broad bottleneck area:

Thus, the commonly stated complaint of instructors that “students can’t interpret texts” is so vague and general that it does not provide a particularly effective point of departure for an exercise in decoding. (p.24)

The problem of interpreting texts is a BOTTLENECK AREA.  it does not lead us to identify specific ways of thinking and practising (mental operations) nor the strategies we might use to support students become more skilled at interpretation.  In any class or course, we will be confronted with many teaching and learning issues.  If we imagine that we are always dealing with 10 of these issues, the Decoding methodology is only effective if you focus in on just one or at most two of these.

So, we have to try and focus in on more specific aspects of the bottleneck area.

A more effective approach would be to formulate the problem less globally, as in, “Students want to go directly to interpreting a text without first getting a good grasp of a text’s content.  They need to observe before they interpret, but they are constantly skipping a thoughtful observation stage. (p.24)

If we look at the way the problem is formulated, we can see a useful structure for defining useful bottlenecks:

1. First, he outlines the problem area (students wanting to interpret before they conduct a close and careful reading of the text)
2. Identifies a specific action area or way of practising (they need to observe before they interpret)

“Thoughtful observation” can be the specific bottleneck the instructor tries to deal with.  From there, they can identify specific mental operations related to thoughtful observation, and to then also focus in on just a few of those mental operations.  For the Decoding methodology to be effective we must be very selective, choose those bottlenecks that are most powerful to help student learning, and those mental operations (ways of thinking and practising) that will be most powerful for student learning."

As I said in the previous email, you need to decide on which area of activity you are going to focus your attention: CURRICULUM OR STUDENTS.

I suggested that you list some bottleneck areas then focu son one area and define a bottleneck. Will this be the same bottleneck for both of you? I think it would be a good plan to have the same bottleneck.

Although we have not decided yet, I think that in Galway, with my colleague in science, we will be focusing on the research partners (which are usually community organisations) his students will be working with for their Master's project. The bottleneck areas might include the choice of research methodology, how to negotiate with the community organisation, how to manage relationships during the research, how to consult with the community about the findings and report. If choice of methodology is the area that is selected, then the specific bottleneck might be defined by a problem (tendency for students to chose a methodology in an abstract way and not related to the community they will be working with), and actions (they need to inquire into community-based methodologies - look at research practice outside the normal textbooks). This might be defined again in terms of how to assess methodologies in relation to diversity.

**What knowledge are you trying to develop using these questions/how do they relate to the bottleneck?**

Because there is no defined bottleneck, I do not know how the questions you have listed help you develop practices that get the students working on appropriate mental actions.

We should Skype, but I would need something to base that Skype discussion on - a defined bottleneck.

You need to

1. Choose whether the focus is on student or curriculum issues (as I outlined in my previous email)
2. Choose a bottleneck area
3. Define a specific bottleneck that indicates the mental operations (ways of thinking and practising).

Does this make sense?

Simon

From: decoding-the-disciplines@googlegroups.com <decoding-the-disciplines@googlegroups.com> on behalf of decodingthedisciplines1 <decodingthedisciplines1@gmail.com>

Sent: 27 September 2017 19:25

To: Decoding the Disciplines

Subject: [Decoding] Podcast about Overcoming Student Learning Bottlenecks

Bart Everson at Xavier University in New Orleans recorded a Podcast about the Decoding the Disciplines process and the new book by me and Leah Shopkow. You can link to it below. I'll lead a workshop at Xavier on Dec. 11, 2017. -Joan

Conversation #61: Joan Middendorf on Learning Bottlenecks

Sep 26, 2017 08:39 am by Bart Everson

Download Conversation #61

http://cat.xula.edu/podcast/audio/tlee061.mp3

A conversation with Joan Middendorf of Indiana University on student learning bottlenecks.

Joan’s specialty lies in leading faculty groups to make disciplinary ways of thinking available to students. With David Pace she developed the “Decoding the Disciplines” approach to define crucial bottlenecks to learning, dissect and model expert thinking, and assess student performance. Joan and the History Learning Project (Pace and Professors Arlene Diaz and Leah Shopkow) were awarded the Menges Research Award from the Professional Development Network in Higher Education and the Maryellen Weimer Scholarly Work on Teaching and Learning Award.

Links for this episode:

• Overcoming Student Learning Bottlenecks by Joan Middendorf and Leah Shopkow (Stylus Publishing)

• DecodingTheDisciplines.org

• Decoding the Disciplines listserv (on Google Groups)

• Decoding the Disciplines YouTube Channel

Transcript

Coming soon!

--

You received this message because you are subscribed to the Google Groups "Decoding the Disciplines" group.

To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to decoding-the-disciplines+unsubscribe@googlegroups.com.

To post to this group, send email to decoding-the-disciplines@googlegroups.com.

Visit this group at https://groups.google.com/group/decoding-the-disciplines.

To view this discussion on the web visit https://groups.google.com/d/msgid/decoding-the-disciplines/a46b6bc2-4541-401a-b3a9-7eb40da5ddf9%40googlegroups.com.

For more options, visit https://groups.google.com/d/optout.

Do contact me if you feel you need any more guidance.

[simon.warren@nuigalway.ie](mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie)  
  
+353 91 495 717  
  
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/celt/>  
  
[http://worriedteacher.wordpress.com](http://worriedteacher.wordpress.com/)

**From:** Sandra Chistolini <[sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it](mailto:sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it)>  
**Sent:** 25 September 2017 12:31:41  
**To:** Warren, Simon  
**Cc:** Paola Supino  
**Subject:** Questionnaires: Decoding

Dear Simon,

we are working on the DD Questionnaire Plan 2017-2018

01DD Entry questionnaire 2-9 October 2017: intended to establish the first **contact** between teacher and student READY

02DD Questionnaire on Expectations 10-16 October 2017: intended to know the student's **expectations** IN PROGRESS INCLUDING SIMON SUGGESTIONS

03DD **Bottleneck** questionnaire 17-23 October 2017: intended to define the obstacle to be communicated to the teacher IN PROGRESS INCLUDING SIMON SUGGESTIONS

Do you want the English version of 01DD?

Keep in touch

Sandra

**From:** Sandra Chistolini <[sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it](mailto:sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it)>  
**Sent:** 22 September 2017 17:21:00  
**To:** Warren, Simon  
**Cc:** Paola Supino  
**Subject:** R: 19Sept2017: Paragraph defining diversity and intercultural understanding bottlenecks R: DECODING PROJECT - NEXT STEPS

Thanks Simon!

We are working on your suggestions, they are very useful

Regards

Sandra

**Da:** Warren, Simon [<mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie>]   
**Inviato:** venerdì 22 settembre 2017 11:57  
**A:** Sandra Chistolini; Paola Supino  
**Oggetto:** Re: 19Sept2017: Paragraph defining diversity and intercultural understanding bottlenecks R: DECODING PROJECT - NEXT STEPS

Sandra and Paola

It is important to remember that the focus this year is on diversity, which is the primary objective of the ERASMUS project.

Therefore you need to be thinking in terms of the possible diversity issues relevant to your classes.  In the training, I highlighted three dimensions where it is useful for us to think about diversity bottlenecks:

* Students
* Curriculum
* Partnerships (teaching/research/community)

For most of us the dimensions of 'student' and 'curriculum' will be most relevant.  I will briefly indicate some areas within each of these dimensions for you to think about.

**STUDENTS**

This might focus on the diversity of the students themselves (ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, etc.) - remember the power shuffle activity.  Possible diversity issues could be

* the economic situation of students might prohibit them being able to fully engage in their education - learning materials, travel costs etc.
* some students might experience discrimination due to ethnicity or religion, as examples
* because of social circumstances some students may have very difficult accommodation issues that might prevent them participating fully

**CURRICULUM**

* are there areas in the curriculum that offer opportunities to encourage students to think positively about diversity - e.g. can students think about educational theories also in terms of diversity?
* can you think about what learning resources you use that can support the objective of diversity - e.g. the major contributions to mathematical or scientific thinking by women, people of colour, the Muslim world?
* are teaching and learning interactions organised in ways that a) supports participation, and b) encourages consideration of diversity (do they have to consider how they work in groups as well as achieving the task?)?

It is important o list, for yourselves, possible bottleneck areas, then choose 1 that you can really focus on in a practical way.

Simon

See my latest publications:

Warren, S. (2016) "Struggling for visibility in higher education: caught between neoliberalism ‘out there’ and ‘in here’ – an autoethnographic account", Journal of Education Policy, 32(2): 127-140  Online 1 November 2016

<http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/Z2uECDXKXq532sCNfcZK/full>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2016.1252062>

Warren. S. (2016) ‘The trouble of ‘living with others’: Language, community and the politics of belonging’**,**Policy Futures in Education, 14(4): 452-465 DOI: 10.1177/1478210316637975

This is a Calm Inbox: email is checked once in the AM

and once in the PM. Learn why at <http://hellotidy.co.nz/calm-inbox/>

Is córas ríomhphoist suaimhnis é seo: seiceáiltear na ríomhphoist uair amháin ar maidin agus uair amháin tráthnóna. Tuilleadh eolais ag <http://hellotidy.co.nz/calm-inbox/>

Dr Simon Warren  
Lecturer in Academic Practice and Higher Education  
Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching  
Arts Millennium Building  
National University of Ireland, Galway

Galway  
Ireland

Léachtóir le Cleachtas Acadúil agus Ardoideachas  
An tIonad Sárchaighdeáin Foghlama agus Teagaisc  
Áras Dán na Mílaoise  
Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh  
Gaillimh  
Éire  
  
[simon.warren@nuigalway.ie](mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie)  
  
+353 91 495 717  
  
<http://www.nuigalway.ie/celt/>  
  
[http://worriedteacher.wordpress.com](http://worriedteacher.wordpress.com/)

**From:** Sandra Chistolini <[sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it](mailto:sandra.chistolini@uniroma3.it)>  
**Sent:** 19 September 2017 15:18:19  
**To:** Warren, Simon; Paola Supino  
**Subject:** 19Sept2017: Paragraph defining diversity and intercultural understanding bottlenecks R: DECODING PROJECT - NEXT STEPS

Hi Simon,

we will meet students very soon and we should be aware of what we have to observe. I understood we have to search for difficulties and after the first lesson I can ask what do they find difficult to understand in what I am presenting.

Please we should be grateful if you would send us examples of “paragraph defining diversity and intercultural understanding bottlenecks”.

We thank you in advance

Warmest regards

Sandra

**Da:** Warren, Simon [<mailto:simon.warren@nuigalway.ie>]   
**Inviato:** martedì 19 settembre 2017 11:54  
**A:** Sandra Chistolini; Paola Supino  
**Oggetto:** DECODING PROJECT - NEXT STEPS

Hi Both

For personal and professional reasons I have only now been able to engage fully again with the project.

For this stage in the project, we have to focus on the main aim of the project concerning diversity and intercultural understanding.  This was the focus of the training in Galway in the summer.

We ended that training outlining what people needed to do.  There were two specific activities:

**Write a short list of possible  diversity bottlenecks**

**Select one diversity bottleneck and write a paragraph defining the bottleneck**

This is what you need to be working on. When you have done that please send me your list of possible bottlenecks and the bottleneck (with definition) you think you can work on this year. It is important to remember what we discussed in the training about the need to keep bottlenecks focused and not seek to do too much.

Simon