**Dealing with affective needs in e-learning - contrasting two cases, in two cultures**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
This chapter presents and contrasts descriptions of two cases of online affective support provided to support students engaged in higher level learning tasks. The cases are set in different cultures, centre upon different intended learning outcomes, and follow different tutorial styles. One (Eastern) tutor acted as a “shepherd leader” in response to needs arising in the Confucian Heritage Culture as the teacher promoted critical thinking, according to the Western model. The other (Western) tutor provided Rogerian facilitation of reflective learning journals, kept by students seeking to develop personal and professional capabilities. In both styles, affective support features strongly. The cultural and pedagogical comparisons between the cases have proved useful to the writers. These distinctions together with the similarities between the two online styles emerge in the comparisons.

**Keywords:** affective needs, asynchronous discussion, Confucian Heritage Culture, constructivism, critical thinking, facilitation, reflection, reflective learning journals, Rogerian, shepherd leadership, social-constructivist, student-centred, support.

**BACKGROUND**

Following the energetic and thorough consideration of the cognitive domain by Bloom and his colleagues (Bloom et al, 1956), the natural desire to move on to deal similarly with the affective domain ran into considerable and well-documented problems (Krathwohl et al, 1964). The result was that, for the next 40 years, affective outcomes in higher education received scant attention. Indeed a sampling of popular texts used in the training of UK university teachers (Cowan, 2005), found that only two made mention of the affective domain or of affective outcomes. One devoted a marginal sentence to this topic (MacDonald, 1997, in Boud et al, 1997); the other (Heywood, 2000) referred to the almost unique practices of Alverno College (Mentkowski, 2000).

Recent publications addressing the importance of affective outcomes (Robinson & Katalushi, 2005) concentrate usefully and worthily on the hitherto neglected and important area of values and ethics (Barnett, 2003). But direct consideration of affective learning outcomes and learning needs, and of tutorial approaches to respond appropriately and effectively to them, are difficult to unearth (Cowan, 2005, p 161). Affective outcomes having been neglected in this way and to this extent, affective learning needs (and supportive teaching) feature only in writings which report pastoral concerns and their resolution. Fry et al (2000), while including a generous chapter on support and guidance by Wallace (2000), make guidance, rather than the fundamental support of learning and development, the selected focus of their advice. Biggs and Tang (2007) index no mentions of “affective”, “needs” or “support”. Eysenck and Piper (1987), in the closing pages of an authoritative although early text (Richardson et al, 1987), made the telling comment that “cognitive psychologists rarely consider motivational or emotional factors at all, a factor which one of these writers had recently bemoaned.”

However, interest in affective needs has recently awakened, or re-awakened. Even as the final draft of this chapter was being refined by its writers, Huyton’s (2009) paper “support and development needs of HE tutors engaged in the emotion work associated with supporting students” cites Beard’s work in helping students to “develop a better understanding of the energies and challenges involved in coming to terms with studying” (Beard et al, 2007, p250). While Huyton (2009) concentrates on the emotional well-being and support of tutors, she usefully reminds readers of the earlier work by Earwaker (1992), stressing, as do the present writers, that learning support should be based on a pedagogy which recognises and takes account of the effects on learners of personal change. Earwaker (2009) drew a firm distinction between counselling and Rogers’ (1980) position of providing learning support which involves both the emotional and the cognitive, and the act of professional counselling.

The present writers remain committed to Rogers’ ideal of unified learning in which the cognitive, experiential and affective are melded (Rogers, 1980). Therefore they do not pursue here the concept of “therapeutic pedagogy” (Ecclestone, 2004: p118). Rather do they offer their cases to this anthology aware that they have been engaging with a relatively neglected topic and challenge.

Circumstances brought the two writers together as strangers, when John was reviewing a paper by Jean (Chiu, 2009) prior to publication. They found common ground, and began to correspond electronically, contrasting the cultures in which they supported their students’ development in e-learning and online interactions. It became clear that they shared concerns regarding their students’ affective needs, although following somewhat different approaches to providing support. Jean’s pedagogy centred on shepherd leadership within a learning community (Chiu, 2007); John followed a Rogerian approach (Cowan, 2004) on a distinctly individual basis.

This chapter is a joint response to the request for cases dealing with e-learning. The writers are both firmly committed to the view that effectiveness in the provision of e-learning depends to a great extent on the prompt identification, and effective resolution, of students’ affective needs. They therefore relate their contrasting experiences in two distinct cases, identify the issues and lessons emergent from them, and report their responses, present and intended. Each narrative account is assembled under sub-headings following the same sequence as is used in the comparison. in accordance with the somewhat detailed sub-headings which will be used in the comparative section, “ANALYSIS OF THIS COMPARISON”, to enable the reader to compare the writers’ experiences. The sub-sections for each case are titled accordingly.

**SETTING THE STAGE (Jean’s Case)**

**Developing critical thinking in an EFL class in Taiwan**

**The context and the cultural setting**

The Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) is characterized by a social norm which is not readily supportive of the public verbalizing of thoughts, or of challenging others face-to-face. Yet both of these overt cognitive activities are, of course, important in the practice of critical thinking. In the paper entitled “Breaking the culture of silence,” Akindele and Trennepohl (2008) - who were writing of a Japanese context not to be confused with Botswana in Africa -

found that 92% of their CHC students perceived that the western communicative approach “broke the culture of silence,” which forced quiet students out of their comfort zone. More than half (63%) approved the approach, leaving 37% opposed the approach, preferring exams and quiet, individual, learning.

Jean’s teaching approach evolved gradually, as she pursued her online facilitation of verbalized critical thinking according to the Western model, for Taiwanese students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). From 1999 to 2006, she tried different learning and teaching approaches, ranging from online newsgroups to E-course discussions of media related issues. The ensuing interactions were frequent though lacking evidence of critical thinking; and the overload of consequent e-mail messages turned her towards investigating other approaches and software (Chiu, 2001).

In view of the continuing dearth of thorough critical thinking within her students’ interactions, Jean wondered (Chiu, 2002) about the potential of online reading and personal journalling for the development of her students’ critical reading skills. Jean’s subsequent doctoral study and teaching innovations (Chiu, 2006) therefore attempted to explore, culturally and pedagogically, suitable blended models to promote critical verbalization by her EFL students.

**CASE DESCRIPTION**

**The underlying pedagogy and rationale for Jean’s Case.**

Jean was now following the culturally appropriate practices commended by McCormick and Davenport (2004). This they had termed “shepherd leadership”, following the practice of shepherds in the field, who build up affectionate relationships with their flock, knowing each one on an individual basis. Academic shepherd leaders, similarly, will know their individual students’ backgrounds, and their behaviour patterns. They will reach out to any “lost” (silent) students by cognitive modelling, and recruit disciples from their class to exercise secondary leadership.

Resolving affective needs has a vital role to play in the development of critical thinking for students from a CHC background. This cultural upbringing prepares them to defer, to refrain from expressing disagreement or challenges in public or formal situations, and especially so in exchanges with a teacher. However, Merryfield (2003) found that engagement in online interactions can assist non-Anglo-Saxon students to break through “the veil of silence”. Hence Jean opted to nurture critical thinking (mainly) online and to foster affective needs by adopting the role of a shepherd leader (McCormick & Davenport, 2004). She therefore chose that she would not be the teacher of the course, but rather would be the “shepherd leader facilitator” (Chiu, 2007), aiming to minimize the periods of CHC-originating silence, which occasioned failure to engage with critical thinking.

**The basic challenge for the students**

The students in this class were confronted by four major challenges (Chiu, 2009):

* To free themselves from CHC customs, practices and inhibitions;
* To think critically, according to Western norms;
* To feel free to question, disagree and criticise – and to express themselves accordingly;
* And, of course, to first identify valid grounds for questioning, disagreeing or criticising.

**The reasons for the students’ silence**

Jean already knew that she would encounter various reasons rendering her students unwilling to “speak out” on line (Sun, 2000; Merryfield, 2003). These included:

* The inhibiting influence of Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC);
* Difficulties in seeing “critical thinking” as potentially constructive;
* Embarrassment with regard to exchanges involving loss of “face”;
* Low self-efficacy;
* Lack of confidence in risk taking;
* Lack of practice in verbalising thoughts and questioning;
* Worries about English grammar and writing style;
* Becoming silent after being embarrassingly engaged (either as challenger or challenged) in a confrontation (Merryfield, 2003)

**The main activity for the students**

In Jean’s programme, the e-learning interaction patterns within a CHC context embodied a three-phase process, which she has described according to the metaphor of nurturing growth in a garden: budding, blossoming and fruiting (Fig 1). She illustrates this figure here with examples taken from a recent presentation of her programme.

*Fig 1 about here*

**Budding**: The first of seven e-learning discussions, planned to occur during one semester and commencing in week 7, was designed to allow students to become familiar with the online environment, while they were “budding”. It was also the warm-up stage used to cultivate student-student and student-teacher interactions – while moving from the face-to-face situation towards an online environment. This phase concentrated on providing affective, cognitive, technical and pedagogical preparation (Chiu, 2008) to help to minimise the teacher’s authority, and to maximise the impact of the e-learning environment, in order to make the “budding” of autonomous critical thinking more possible.

In the second online discussion, a face-to-face class debate was carried forward. One student posted a message on her debate stance. The negative side debater followed suit, but was challenged by Jean for lack of evidence in her claims. That student did not reply, but a teammate volunteered to present evidence to support her. Thus teammates helped one another in finding and presenting credible evidence to validate viewpoints. This budding phase helped the students to prepare themselves online for the next phase.

**Blossoming:** After the warm-up stage, the participants moved on to engage actively in critical discussion of controversial issues. The phase of blossoming transmuted at times to overt confrontation. Prompted by reminders, face-to-face grouping dynamics transported directly online. A student who had previously been identified as a “silent girl”, broke the cultural wall (Chiu, 2009) in week 10, to question the assumptions behind an issue. Three quiet students cross-referenced one another. Additionally, a fourth member of the group firmly refuted her group mate’s stance. In this stage, the informal and courteous face-to-face small group dynamics seemed to have been transformed, with appropriate cognitive support and encouragement, to being “critical”.

One sharp online confrontation led to a call for “Peace”, by which a mediating student sought to promote cultural harmony in accordance with CHC norms. A follow-up message then offered affective support for the challenged one, with an appreciative response. Students had now dared to challenge one another, had risked violating the CHC “wall”, and had even challenged the facilitator. These were thus acts of blossoming, leaping ahead in the public expression of confrontation. However (and typically), in this incident challenger and challenger withdrew from subsequent exchanges for different cultural reasons. Each required the energetic support of their shepherd leader to overcome their cultural embarrassment, to regain their confidence and, only after some time and facilitative effort, to again find willingness to participate.

**Fruiting:** After confrontation, the final phase of fruiting culminated and reached fulfilment in the full e-learning discussion experience. Affective messages had smoothly followed the previous three discussions (Chiu, 2009). A quiet student now broke her silence, and in effect challenged a senior who was more outspoken, both in class and online. However, in this her first challenging contribution, the quiet student found it was more empowering to speak appropriately to someone who was already in line with her viewpoint than to directly confront an opposing senior. This oblique confrontation adjusted the cultural boundary from open disagreement towards indirect disagreement, avoiding unpleasantness and with only limited embarrassment. This normalized the confrontation as part of a democratic e-learning culture, as a result of the cognitive, affective, and pedagogical support and leadership which had been offered.

Jean had found that, if their critical thinking was to be effectively developed, her students would need:

* cognitive, affective, pedagogical and technical support;
* face-to-face small group support before the online interactions;
* modified (preparatory) debates in face-to-face situations;
* personal, often face-to-face, encouragement;
* a friendly teacher’s “shepherd leadership” throughout (Chiu, 2007).

**The students’ affective needs**

Affective needs consequently arose for Jean’s students, due to their CHC upbringing which had established commendable values and desirable behaviour patterns apparently incompatible with engaging actively in Western critical thinking. In breaking from this precedent and the pattern of cultural expectations, the students needed support and encouragement – constantly, and from the outset. Hence the focus for the supportive activity of shepherd leadership concentrated primarily on affective needs and anxieties, supporting students in resolving these needs in pursuit of the determined cognitive goals of the programme.

**The basic challenge for the tutor**

Educators in the West (Kneser, Pilkington, & Treasure-Jones, 2001; Pilkington, 2001) identified the desirability for moderating tutors in e-learning discussions to use Socratic strategies, and to play the role of the devil’s advocate as frequently as possible (Walker, 2004). They found teachers’ online “challenging” and “probing” to be effective in eliciting students’ further clarification of their arguments and thinking. However Jean had then to discover as a matter of some importance whether or not this confrontational model would fit into, and promote, a worthwhile and vital e-learning discussion in a CHC culture, where probing, challenge and even arguing in formal classes are alien.

The shepherd leader can influence students in the long term through her relationship with them, by cognitively modelling the type of thinking and interaction into which she seeks to lead them. Cognitive modelling is a gradual process, which is most effective when it brings about modification of thinking and behaviour by example, and by “immersing” students in a different practice, in this case precluding fragmented adoption of the Western framework.

In so doing, the tutor-shepherd can in due course lead some of her flock to take up secondary leadership on their own part. She can do this by encouraging and training student leaders to participate actively, and thus to influence other students by their example. As already mentioned, Merryfield (2003) found online interactions by student leaders an effective way to help remove the “veil of silence” - particularly on the part of students who are not native English speakers. An active student leader can then help the rest of the class to dismantle cultural and interpersonal barriers to challenging different thoughts online (Merryfield, 2003).

**Facilitating consideration of weaknesses in students’ critical thinking**

The facilitator’s content-centred facilitation took the form of clear but gentle reminders, incorporating prompts relating to such questions as:

*What is the stance/opinion of the author of the article you quote?*

*What is the assumption behind this stance?   
Is the evidence credible? Can it be double checked with other sources?  
What is the counter opinion?.....and your evaluation, after logical thinking?  
Before you state your stance, present facts or post the extra links which you found online to build up your understanding about this complex issue.*

Such prompts, which were not all asked in one communication and were always expressed in mild terms, nevertheless provided reminders of the need to critically evaluate the sources, the stance and the assumptions of each student contributor.

**Declaration of criteria and standards**

The above style of facilitation and cognitive modelling implicitly and gradually conveyed criteria and standards, in respect of the need to present facts and to cite sources, and to consider these objectives, before coming to, and expressing, a conclusion (Yu & Chou, 2004).

**The nature of the tutor/student relationships**

As Watkins and Biggs (2001, p282) convincingly describe, the role of the CHC teacher goes beyond that of being a lecturer and an authority in the classroom. It extends to the moral role of a caring “parent” – which is why students feel a “collectivist obligation to behave within the socially accepted ways.” For Jean, in an informal role, this cultural expectation implied her placing of stress on informal contacts (Ho, 2001), providing support and encouragement orally or by supportive smiles, and generally by building up strong and warm personal relationships, to prepare students for cognitive challenge (Walker, 2004).

**The pedagogical style of the tutor’s initiatives**

Jean’s actions were thus primarily pro-active. She initiated and actively guided from the outset, modelled behaviour, trained, (Yu & Chou, 2004), and reached out for critical thinking development (Kneser et al., 2001; Pilkington, 2001).

**The students’ interactions with peers**

Interaction with peers was an integral and predominant part of the students’ activity, productive or otherwise (Merryfield, 2003).

**The focus for the tutor**

Jean had deliberately abstained from a teaching role. Although many of her interjections related to the students’ handling of the module and task content, she took her primary function as being the provision of affective and cognitive support (Chiu, 2009).

**CURRENT CHALLENGES**

The next immediate challenge for Jean is to build in face-to-face and online discussions, and foster students’ critical thinking according to the Western norm, provided online with modelling by a British academic recruited to this collaboration. Students will learn to cross their cultural boundaries with the affective support provided by the tutor and the British academic, prior to the critical thinking activity.

**SETTING THE STAGE (John’s Case)**

**Developing reflective thinking in a Western context**

**The context and the cultural setting**

John’s classes have included a majority of students of Scottish origin, with a few English students and (later) some from the Middle and Far East.

John has long been committed to the promotion of student-centred learning and the development of generic capabilities (Cowan, 1987). He pioneered large-scale independence in undergraduate learning in the UK (Cowan et al, 1973). He offered autonomy to students, first in their choice and use of a suitable learning method and rate of study (Butts et al, 1976), then in determining the content of parts of their studies (Cowan, 1978), and finally in self-assessment (Cowan, 1984; Boyd & Cowan, 1986; Cowan, 1988). More recently he has concentrated on the promotion of reflective practice (Cowan, 2006a), as a means of purposefully developing personal and professional capabilities.

John has depended upon several types of reflective activity. The first (then without e-learning) involved learning journals concentrating on reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987). This was a radical programme, seeking thorough development of interdisciplinary capabilities at first year undergraduate level (Cowan, 1987). It established the pattern for what he subsequently developed on-line. Following social-constructivist workshops focused on key generic abilities, each week his students reflected in a personal journal on their answers to the question “What have I learnt about learning, or thought about thinking, which should make me more effective next week than I was last week?” Each weekly journal was handed in, as hard copy, for speedy (and confidential) facilitative comment by John or a colleague, who nudged or challenged the journallers to consider further, and then to make their own decisions.

Thereafter John went on to facilitate students’ electronic reflective journals in a blended learning degree programme (Weedon & Cowan, 2001, 2002). These journals called for what John has called “reflection-for-action” (Cowan, 2006a). Each week, students studying an Enquiry Skills module were expected to write reflectively, asking themselves how best to tackle the next cognitive challenge in their self-directed Enquiry project, and trying to answer as they wrote in “stream of consciousness” writing. Many students increasingly devoted almost as much of their online journalling time to relevant affective needs as they did to the metacognitive process analysis - which concentrated on thinking about how to tackle the various aspects of enquiring. Once again, John and colleagues pinpointed the need for consideration of affective and cognitive issues, but did not suggest solutions.

**CASE DESCRIPTION**

**The underlying pedagogy and rationale**

John expected his students to initially find reflection a strange and demanding activity, and one with outcomes which might not emerge for them in the short term. For that reason, he and his colleagues devoted a great deal of effort to introductory activities, using appropriate examples (Cowan, 2006a), to ease and encourage the students’ induction.

This pedagogy is constructivist (Cowan, 2006a, p.46, Fig 4.1), though preliminary group work can be structured (Cowan, 2006,a p.49, Fig 4.2) to be social-constructivist (Cowan, 2004; Francis & Cowan, 2007). In the examples in this case, however, John followed a primarily constructivist pedagogy, which usually passed through several iterations of ascending impact (Cowan, 2006a, p. 53, Fig 4.3). In such personal reflection, social-constructivist interaction other than with the tutor is necessarily slight and inappropriate.

**The basic challenge for the students**

Journallers were soon quite frank, privately, about their needs and feelings - regarding their lack of confidence in dealing with unfamiliar course tasks, their difficulties in identifying possible options, their resentment at times on being asked to take responsibility for tasks which they saw as their teachers’ responsibilities, and their unwillingness to reveal their assumed inadequacy to teaching staff, or even to fellow-students.

**The reasons for the students’ reticence**

John’s students were reluctant from the outset to reveal to anyone else the fine detail of their highly personal cognitive thinking, their articulation of that, and their success – or lack of it – in applying their consequent generalisations. Hence he opted to promote constructive reflection in personal (and almost private) journals, which were not to be assessed and whose content remained strictly confidential. Following Gibbs (1988), he suggested that writers might begin by writing about their feelings in reaction to the recent experience or forthcoming task which was to feature in their reflections.

The content of many of the journals became intimately personal – in an academic sense. Students analysed their satisfaction with approaches which had developed effectively for them and which they were applying elsewhere, to good effect. Many entries were specifically affective in origin, stemming from the consequences of poor choices and difficult decisions, and admitting reluctance to discuss these problems with peers or even with tutors. Increasingly, in addition, most journals became metacognitive in nature, as writers self-reliantly sought, analysed and actively experimented with their own solutions. Open frankness in such matters is not characteristic in overt conversations between Scottish students or with their tutors.

It was always notably rare for a student to mention or respond to a comment on a journal entry, whether cognitive or affective in focus. It seemed to be firmly understood and accepted by both parties that journal content and tutor’s comments remained personal and confidential, both ways. This confidentiality (and accompanying reticence) was akin to the constrained communication in a small community when a villager meets their parish priest midweek, and neither will make reference to what was said when the priest was partly hidden, and they had spoken together in the confessional.

**The main activity for the students**

Thus John’s aim for his students was for them to develop and put to good use effective metacognitive skills through self-questioning; and thereby to enable them to enhance their higher level cognitive and interpersonal capabilities. He relied on facilitated and highly personal reflective thinking to lead to the development of relevant personal and professional capabilities of transferable usefulness and value.

**The students’ affective needs**

The affective needs which became apparent as these experiences progressed resonated with findings in John’s Open University activities (George, 1996; George et al, 2004). The journallers needed to:

* establish a sound estimate of their abilities, and develop realistic self-efficacy;
* benchmark their study experiences, or discover whether a task was proving depressingly difficult because it was indeed difficult, or because they lacked the intellectual grasp with which to tackle it (Cowan, 2007);
* norm-reference their progress;
* avoid exposing themselves to frank and hurtful comments from peers or tutors.

These affective needs emerged for the individual concerned from the cognitive and interpersonal demands of the course. They were only sometimes, and almost grudgingly, admitted face-to-face to a tutor or peers. And yet they were needs with which students seemed able to cope to their eventual satisfaction in the semi-anonymous and non-judgemental context of their facilitated personal journalling.

**The basic challenge for the tutor**

From these online experiences, John formulated three subjective impressions. The first was that the intimacy and frankness between journallers and commenter seems radically greater, and hence more effective, when this is their only working relationship with each other. John has discussed this deliberately virtual relationship (electronically) with former students. He has been told how much easier it is to be frank with yourself “when you don’t feel that someone you know is looking over your shoulder”. The somewhat dispassionate commenter is then “just a name at the foot of a computer screen”.

Next, John has noted that open-ended feedback through routine university channels has often testified to the fact that the responding student had “trusted” John, during their year of contact. Given what Rogers (1961) and, later, Brookfield (1990) had written about the importance of students being able to trust their tutor, this aspect of the relationship seems an important affective e-learning need (and variable) which merits further attention (Cowan, 2006b), seeking especially to discover the features of online relationships which promote trust.

Finally, John has found that his students can feel the pressures of being solitary, even if they meet others face-to-face in class. This was apparent at times in the social content of the friendly e-mail cover notes which were increasingly sent with the journals as the attachments. John has found it useful (and appreciated) to display limited congruence (usually within his own cover notes) with the students’ volunteered feelings.

**Facilitating consideration of weaknesses in students’ thinking**

John and his colleagues followed a Rogerian approach (Rogers, 1961, 1969, 1980). They set out to empathise implicitly with the students’ analyses of challenges and methods, and their expressions of feelings; and they endeavoured to accept them all with unconditional positive regard. To provide an effective framework for cognitive development, they relied on carefully planned course activities to initiate reflective thinking, linked to their blunt and very directed facilitative comments, albeit on Socratic lines, as questions worthy of consideration. Facilitation with regard to the associated affective needs was thus mostly indirect, but tangible.

**Declaration of criteria and standards**

John soon decided (Cowan, 2006a, p22) that every time he called upon a student to share their personal reflections with him, he should thereafter share with them his own current reflections, drafted to the same remit. This arrangement has been the subject of much volunteered appreciation from students. It probably constitutes cognitive modelling; but, for John, it is primarily an attempt to establish an equitable relationship with those whom he asks to expose their intimate thinking to him.

Criteria and standards were thus made explicit in the commenters’ facilitative questions, and were then also implicit in John’s own shared journalling. Thus criteria and standards were, in effect, being modelled collegially, having been tabled explicitly and for discussion at the outset. It was left to the students to determine and adopt these for themselves, and to apply them to their own reflective thinking.

**The nature of the tutor/student relationships**

Initially, and for a long time thereafter, commenting was detached and impersonal. In some cases, associated informal exchanges began to develop within the cover notes which sent or returned reflections as attachments. Consequently, by the end of a year of contact, a few significant virtual relationships had developed and were to continue on almost personal terms, for years after students had completed the programme which brought them together with their commenter.

**The pedagogical style of the tutor’s initiatives**

In contrast to the comparable account in Jean’s pro-active case, John and his fellow commenters followed Rogers’ principles and re-active practice (Cowan, 2006a, pp 200-203). With unconditional positive regard for the subject matter of students’ journals, they empathised with the thoughts, priorities and feelings recorded by students. On a few occasions they volunteered congruence through a personal example or response. However, they firmly used questions or comments to point out inconsistencies in thinking, omissions from considered factors or possible outcomes, and neglect of implications. They did not offer suggestions about how the journallers should respond; they simply tried to highlight instances where the journaller’s thinking might become more rigorous and searching. Subsequent evaluations have shown that students perceived the style, overall, as caring and supportive – despite the overt concentration on developing rigorous reflective thinking.

**The students’ interactions with peers**

To the knowledge of the commenters, the students had no relevant interactions with their peers. In the early days, before electronic working in a blended format and when the handwritten journals were returned physically to the students’ pigeon holes, 90% of the class swarmed around, seized their journals, and stood aside on their own to read the comments quietly, without any observable conversation between students immediately thereafter.

**The focus for the tutor**

The commenting tutor sought above all to promote pertinent self-questioning on the part of each student. When the learning experience had been successful, it led to situations in which student journallers (rightly) declared that they had learnt to self-question. “John, I don’t think I need you any more. I know the questions I still need to think about.”

**CURRENT CHALLENGES**

In the face of ever-increasing numbers, the next challenge for John is to find ways to influence progress of relationships which will be discerned as personal in accordance with the effective practice described here, yet with numbers which preclude the arrangements already described.

**ANALYSIS OF THIS COMPARISON OF THE TWO CASES**

The writers have here reported their involvement with affective needs arising in respect of different educational aims, in different settings, in different discipline areas, and leading to different approaches to the teaching challenges. It seems useful now to highlight both similarities and comparisons. The writers follow a helpful suggestion from a reviewer, in presenting that comparison in tabular form. The sequence used is in accordance with the two case accounts, but the short summaries given are often derived for outwith the corresponding item in these sections.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature | Jean’s Case | John’s Case |
| The context and cultural setting | Developing critical thinking in an EFL class in Taiwan | Facilitating development of generic abilities, in Scotland |
| The underlying pedagogy and rationale | Shepherd leadership | Rogerian facilitation of reflective writing |
| The basic challenge for the students | To think critically according to predominantly Western norms | To probe thinking metacognitively, and apply the outcomes to professional development |
| The reasons for the students’ reticence | Cultural unacceptability of expressing disagreement and challenging peers and the teacher | Embarrassment when expressing feelings, and awkwardness with the strangeness of metacognitive thinking |
| Main activity for students | Contributing in English to group discussions calling for critical thinking | Constructive personal reflection on experiences and challenges |
| The students’ affective needs | Support and encouragement, especially when breaching CHC norms | Objectively judging self, and confronting that judgement without embarrassment |
| The basic challenge for the tutor | Students’ reticence to speak out and publicly express disagreement in class | Students’ reticence to think and work deeply and personally, and to commit thoughts and feelings to writing |
| Engaging with weaknesses in students’ thinking | Early in the process; gentle prompting and individual encouragement | Early in the process; explicit though non-judgemental identification of questions to consider |
| Declaration of criteria and standards | Emerge as experience progresses, | Explicit from the induction, and indirectly from John’s shared journals |
| The nature of the tutor/student relationships | Warm, supportive, and encouraging person-to-person relationships, often face-to-face | Detached, almost anonymous, facilitation, helping the student to be the best that they can be |
| The pedagogical style of the tutor’s initiatives | Pro-active: guiding, modelling, training, reaching out, usually on an informal basis | Reactive: facilitating formatively on the basis of student’s submitted and explicit reflections |
| The students’ interactions with peers | Frequent, and central to the method | Infrequent, and incidental |
| The focus for the tutor | Affective  Providing affective support, and facilitating critical thinking | Reactive and metacognitive  Prompting deep thinking and self-questioning. Affective support implicit in empathy. |
| The next challenge for the tutor | Enhanced effectiveness in achieving desired critical outcomes, with some Western input | Making an already effective process cost-effective with larger numbers of students |

**CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER CHALLENGES**

As the table of comparisons suggests, there are common grounds in the two cases of student affective and cognitive needs across cultural boundaries; yet these may call for contrasting proactive-reactive approaches within different cultural contexts.

The underlying pedagogies and rationales which have been described in the two cases in this chapter are:

* Shepherd leadership, for CHC students (Chiu, 2009)
* Rogerian facilitation of reflective writing, for western students (Cowan, 2006b)

The pedagogical style of the tutors’ initiatives in these cases has focussed on being:

* Pro-active: in guiding, modelling and reaching out to CHC students on an informal basis (Akindele & Trennepohl, 2008; Brookfield, 1990);
* Re-active: facilitating on the basis of the students’ submitted and explicitly private reflections (Cowan, 2006a).

In these reported cases, then, the nature of the tutor/student relationships has proved effective when it has been either

* Affectively supportive, and encouraging of person-to-person relationships which are often face-to-face, for non-Anglo-Saxon Students \(Merryfield, 2003; George, 1996; George et al, 2004; Chiu, 2009), or
* Detached and explicit facilitation according to induction and tutor-modelling (Cowan, 2006a), for western students, with embedded and implicit responsiveness to affective needs (Rogers, 1961, 1969, 1980). .

The writers have thus come to see that their approaches are complementary – and not contradictory. So they conclude and recommend that:

**In activities designed to develop higher level abilities, affective needs are significant for student learning and development.** Affective needs should therefore feature prominently on the agenda for those who aspire to provide effective student support.

**The origin of many affective needs is to be found in the students’ prior experiences.**

Recognition of cultural factors and responses to them, should be reflected in chosen supportive approaches. This will call for thought and ingenuity, by students as well as teachers, in dealing with individuality and especially in cross-cultural groups of international students, with their very varied affective needs (Merryfield, 2003; Watkins & Biggs, 2001).

**An approach embodying empathy with, and unconditional positive regard for, student feelings, is effective in resolving affective needs.**

Empathy with, and unconditional positive regard for, student feelings, apparently provides an important key to unlocking and resolving affective needs. Developing empathy, as indicated in both cases, is easier said than done. It can thus usefully feature as a priority in staff development, as well as in educational research. Effort should also be devoted to future action research enquiries which may identify the effectiveness of such interventions, and their impact on the resolution of affective needs.

**The writers’ approaches as described in their two cases are complementary, cater for different groupings of affective needs, and are both important for learners.**

Both approaches should somehow receive attention in every learning and teaching situation. In the writers’ cases, this will prompt Jean to further explore the potential of her current one-to-one interactions to cater for affective needs; and will encourage John to seek a collaborator, to undertake the shepherd leader role in his classes.

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Affective

Hindrances

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| Online Critical Participation: Crossing Cultural Boundary | |
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Cultural

Cognitive

I. Phase of Budding: Relation Buildup

Perceived

## Supportiveness CHC

**II. Phase of Blossoming: Confrontation**

**III. Phase of Fruiting:**

**New Boundaries**

Fig 1: Diagram of the Process of the Cross-Cultural Online Experience