

A Comedy of Errors: Navigating Qualitative Research on Faculty Development

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1. What We Did

'What I should think of this, I cannot tell'

- Faculty Learning Community - Learning about & implementing Backward Design (UbD)
- Three members wrote ~ weekly reflections
- A chronicle of our circuitous path and multiple attempts to capture faculty response to learning and implementing a new pedagogy

Instructor	# of words	# of entries in reflections journal
Mike	2026	5
Kate	4268	8
Nancy	4786	13

Instructor	UbD Experience	Content Area	Course Level for UbD implementation
Mike	Experienced	Earth Science	8 th grade Earth Science
Kate	Moderate	Earth Science	College first year / second year AHS 109 – Environmental Geology
Nancy	Novice	Engineering Statistics	College third year / fourth year STAT 353 Engineering Statistics STAT 417 Applied Probability & Simulation
Kirstin	Experienced	Reading & Study Skills	College first year; reflections mentor, observer, student feedback

4. First Attempt

'What, are you mad, that you do reason so?'

- Bandura's (1977) work on self-efficacy was used as reflection prompts.
- Started our analysis of reflections trying to use Bandura's theory of self-efficacy
- Self-efficacy plays major role in how individuals engage in tasks, goals, and challenges
- We selected specific questions from Bandura's teacher self-efficacy scale
- Quantitative nature of Bandura's scale failed to capture qualitative aspects of our reflections, and was abandoned



Figure 2. Components of self-efficacy, adapted from Bandura (1997)

References

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- Weinstein, C. E., Palmer, D. R., & Acee, T. W. (2016). Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (3rd ed.). Clearwater, FL: H & H Publishing.
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2. Timeline showing 'Progress'

'You would all this time have proved there is no time ...'

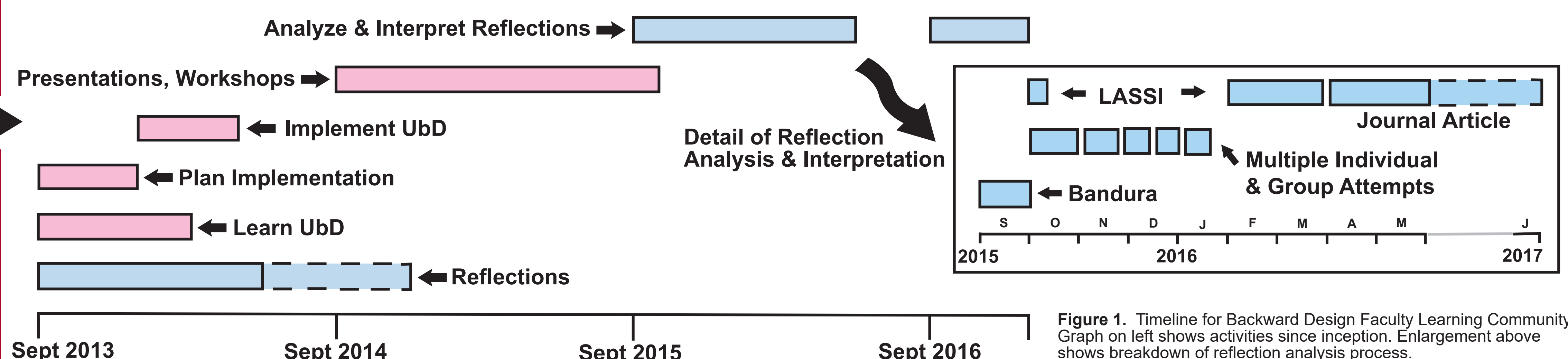


Figure 1. Timeline for Backward Design Faculty Learning Community. Graph on left shows activities since inception. Enlargement above shows breakdown of reflection analysis process.

3. Selected Reflections

'your own handwriting would tell you what I think'

I am growing more anxious (in a good way) to wrap up my first unit and see if my EQs will be the springboard that I hope them to be.

Fewer EQs IS definitely better. Still worry about depth of connection. Still worry about their ability to communicate through projects

I am fascinated with the technique and am convinced it is a better way to teach than traditional methods

The first class in the module went down like a lead balloon - or at least it felt like that to me - BUT I KNOW I was doing the right thing.

...perhaps as I become more experienced and adept at the approach, some of the steps won't take as much time as they take me now.

Although we all struggle with some of the same things, we also struggle in different areas ... this is valuable ... Different personalities, teaching styles, and thought patterns ... help expand our views. This helps ...

However, this evening I did have an epiphany with one enduring question and that was reward enough! (what a high!)

What really freaks me out is that when one is doing UbD, the whole issue of really knowing one's content is taken for granted .. I need to get REALLY on top of the new material

The UbD approach requires a fair amount of work upfront.

Already, though, this book is teaching me more about assessment than I have ever learned elsewhere.

The last 'ah ha' came from today's meeting. If I can bridge the gap between engaging in the EQ and being able to answer it in a detailed and deep way, then one of the big puzzle pieces falls into place.

I am feeling ... excited, motivated and positive about teaching and how the course is going ... I am putting more thought into planning and prep than ever, but it is paying off - at least in terms of how I feel about the class ...

There is a sense that I am getting a handle on the enduring understandings needed

This is going to require time. A LOT of time.

So ... success it seems. This has given me a whole new level of vigor and confidence around what I am trying to accomplish in our FLC.

I still do not see it as a waste of time ... I really do believe it is a better way of teaching even if the results are not strongly supporting that hypothesis.

"apparent" understanding as opposed to true understanding. This is exactly what I am worried about.

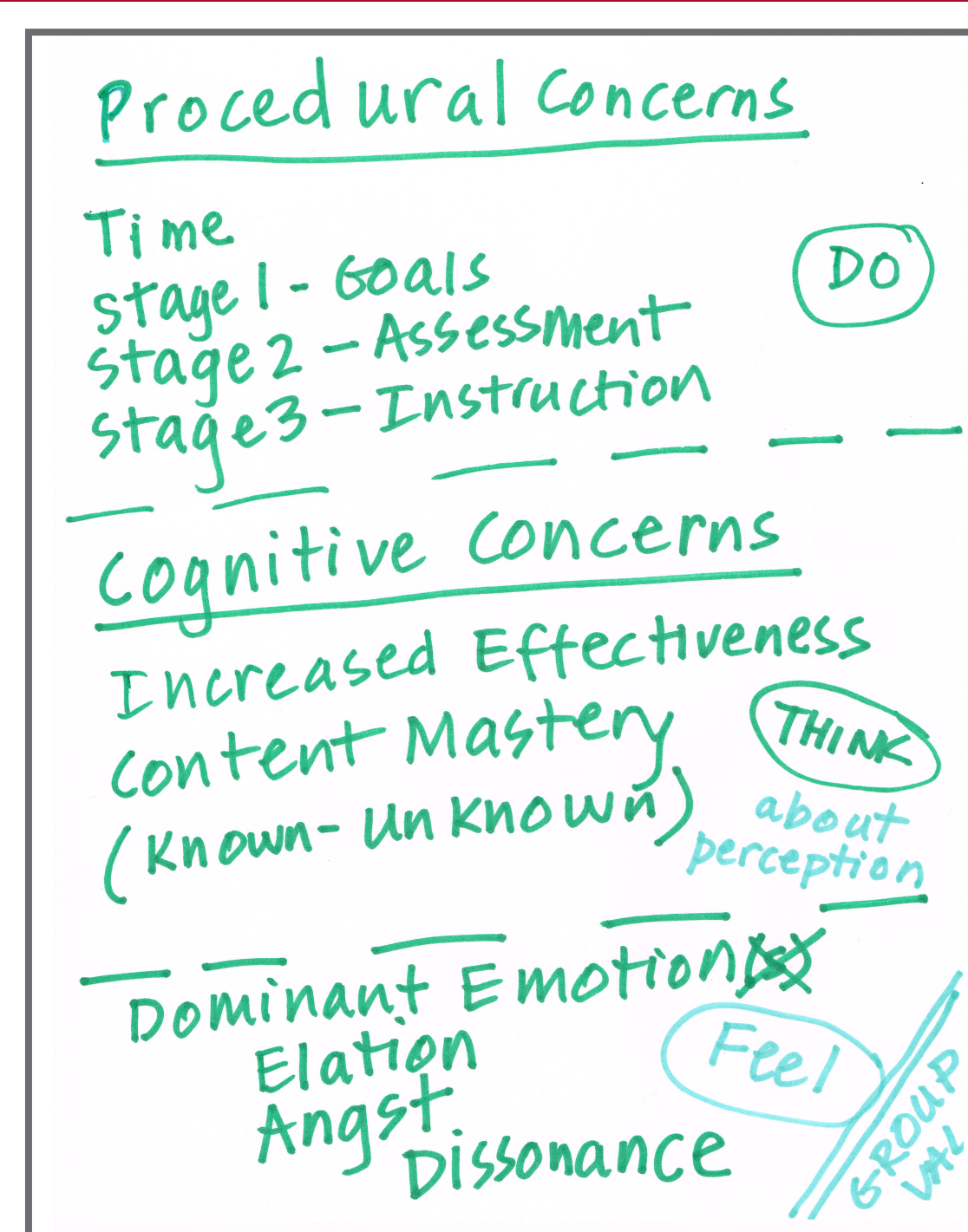
The empathy part of understanding can come in to play when exploring any big idea in any area.

Which is it going to be? Engagement ... it matters! ... why do we choose to learn (or not to learn)?

I am eager to begin collecting data to see how accurate my own intuitions ended up being

5. Second Attempt: A Series of Individual & Group Coding Efforts

- Individually search reflections for themes - found no universal words
- Use one set of themes to code individual reflections - many concepts missed
- Compile individually coded reflections to mesh with timeline for semi-quantitative analysis - no pattern emerged



'Smoother'd in errors, feeble, shallow, weak ...' 'Thou couldst not feel his meaning?'

- Identified three 'groupings': Procedural Concerns, Cognitive Concerns, and Dominant Emotion, plus 'Group Valued' - too broad, missed valuable insights
- Individually analyze reflections to look for patterns - lacked framework
- Abandon individual and group effort to ID themes - task seems hopeless

Figure 3. Image of whiteboard synthesis of group theme brainstorm

6. Third Attempt: LASSI-derived Themes

'After so long grief, such festivity!'

Discovered that LASSI* scales provide a helpful guide to theme identification

*Learning And Study Skills Inventory

Scale	Descriptor	
Motivation	Persistence	Will
Attitude	Ability to overcome obstacles	Will
Anxiety	Degree to which we worry about success	Will
Selecting Main Ideas	Prioritizing content; developing EUs & EOs	Skill
Information Processing	Processing & Implementation of UbD	Skill
Test Strategies	Do assessments reflect anticipated student learning?	Skill
Self-Testing	Ability to analyze and learn from implementation - 'hold a mirror'	Self-regulation
Concentration	Ability to direct & maintain attention to task	Self-regulation
Time Management	Avoid procrastination, up-front work, plan ahead	Self-regulation
Using Academic Resources	Use of FLC teamwork, collaboration, CETL	Self-regulation

What challenges have you encountered integrating qualitative research into your work?

Try coding the reflections using the Lassi-derived Themes!

7. Conclusions

'I'll tell you when, an you tell me wherefore'

A vast wasteland of errors? NO!
Valuable lessons on qualitative research

- Its place and purpose
- Adds nuance and insight to quantitative results
- Expectations we can hold for it
- Value of 'pawing' our reflections

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