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Jones, Evan L. (2006) CRA in a Tertiary Dance Context. In *Proceedings HKDC 2006*, pages pp. 90-100, Hong Kong.

When CRA was initially mooted here at QUT, I was one of the most strident opponents in the Dance discipline. "We can't break dancing down into bits and sum the assessed bits. It is a holistic, artistic endeavour, a creative expression full of nuances and inarticulatable subtleties, complex interrelationships and subjective interpretations!" What I can now acknowledge is that I was avoiding the immensely challenging tasks of teasing out the nuances, of unpacking the "inarticulatable" subtleties, of penetrating the opaque and esoteric subjective interpretations, of defining bits and methods of assessing bits that might add up to the whole, of seeking consensual agreement on "artistic endeavour" and "creative expression" and finally finding words to express how I *knew* that a student's dancing qualities were at a specific grade level.

The QUT requirement to implement CRA has provided the motivation…….and also the context in which to investigate the private, hidden mysteries of the subject matter we are teaching. I still believe this content must be assessed holistically because the whole **is** more than the sum of the parts. But this holistic judgement can henceforth be deconstructed retrospectively in the now-familiar language of the performance standards so that the students can be made aware of specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. The results will be an increase in clarity, transparency, accountability and perhaps even satisfaction for all those involved in the learning and assessment processes.

According to Prof. Royce Sadler, the director of the Griffith Institute for Higher Education, "Students deserve to know at the point of beginning a course of study about the criteria by which judgments will be made on the quality of their work. This is to enable students to use the information to shape their work appropriately while it is being produced, and is primarily a prospective function" (2003).

It is this prospective function of making explicit assessment criteria and standards statements available to students which I believe helps promote the alignment of learning with assessment. During the time of this Teaching Fellowship, many anecdotes from the chalk face have been exchanged. One was a (perhaps apocryphal) rejection of giving students assessment criteria at the beginning of the semester: "No we can't do that. Then they'll know what we are going to examine them on!" Indeed! And then the assessment tasks can be designed to assess the quality of the students' learning rather than their perspicacity in second-guessing assessing!

Sadler used the following as a working definition of criterion: "A distinguishing property or characteristic of any thing, by which its quality can be judged or estimated, or by which a decision or classification may be made." (Etymology: from Greek kriterion: a means for judging.)

Sadler elaborated, "Criteria are attributes that are useful for providing leverage in making judgments. Although judgments can be made either analytically (using criteria) or holistically (without using explicit criteria), particular judgments, once made, cannot easily be explained without them."

Let's have a closer look at learning. The banking concept, as Freire calls it, the idea of the student-as-empty-vessel-to-be-filled-with-knowledge is not one to which I ascribe. My current preference is to view learning as a voyage of personal, self-relevant discovery of information and the creation of ideas and interrelationships. This seems to me to be grounded within a constructivist paradigm, but it might be constructionist! Lisa Galarneau writes, "The hallmark of the constructivist approach is the creation of a learning environment that allows learners to construct their own knowledge via active participation and reflection, rather than simply being offered information." Moshe Feldenkrais, physicist and pioneer in somatic movement and therapy, has

played an important role in my careers both as dancer and teacher. Feldekrais has said, "Learning in concerned with the unknown becoming known which is realised after its discovery." "For successful learning we must proceed at our own rate." "I am going to be your last teacher. Not because I'll be the greatest teacher you may ever encounter, but because from me you will learn how to learn. When you learn how to learn, you will realise that there are no teachers, that there are only people learning and people learning how to facilitate learning." One very relevant, central and effective method of staff facilitating learning is to make the criteria and standards involved in assessment available to the students. Assessment is a central issue for students, so we need to make it a central issue in the design, structure, presentation and content of the curricula and its constituent units.

One of the scholarly goals in the recently published Teaching Capabilities Framework booklet says, "Structure assessment from a student-centred rather than teacher-dependant perspective to encourage student autonomy and responsibility for their own learning".

A major component of my research as a Teaching Fellow has been to investigate the MOPP statement that "Clear standards that are high but attainable motivate students and focus their energy on learning rather than on competition with peers." The research of Ryan and Deci has formed the theoretical framework for my hypothesis that Criterion-Referenced Assessment can stimulate the student's **intrinsic** motivation to learn. It was through studying the research conducted by Rust, O'Donovan and Berry and also Breen and Lindsay in England as well as that of Vallerand, Pelletier, Blais and company in Canada that I arrived at the posited CRA/intrinsic motivation correlation.

Assessment has historically been closely linked with extrinsic motivation and contingent rewards – work hard to learn this to get a good grade or pass, actions "performed instrumentally to attain some separate consequence." (Brophy, 2004, p186) By contrast, CRA can be viewed as an integrated component of a whole-of-learning process through which the students might realise some of their basic psychological needs such as feeling in control, a sense of competence and knowing where they are and how they might progress from there.

Ryan and Deci have researched and published extensively on operative and affective factors involving various forms and continua of motivation. They published a Cognitive Evaluation Theory in 1980. "This theory argues that events that negatively affect a person's experience of autonomy or of competence diminish intrinsic motivation, whereas events that support perceived autonomy and competency enhance intrinsic motivation." According to Cognitive Evaluation Theory, rewards, such as grades, and processes, such as assessment, will diminish intrinsic motivation if they are principally perceived as a *controlling* mechanism. "On the other hand, rewards can also convey information or feedback and to the degree that this *informational aspect* of rewards is more salient, these rewards will maintain or enhance intrinsic motivation." In 2000, Ryan and Deci expanded their Cognitive Evaluation Theory into a broader Self-Determination Theory. This is based on the assumption that "humans have inherent propensities to be intrinsically motivated, to assimilate their social and physical worlds, to integrate external regulations into self-regulations, and in so doing integrate themselves into a larger social whole….yet these propensities must be nurtured by experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to operate effectively." Informing the students about the criteria and standards by which they

will be assessed, and integrating these tools in the unit content and presentation, will contribute to these experiences.

Biggs claimed in 1999 that "the fundamental assumption, that it is what the *student* does that is the important thing, may have entered the constructivist-type rhetoric of many teachers, but it remains aloof from practice." (Biggs, 1999, p63) This rhetoric may increasingly influence practice as we are encouraged to adopt more student-centred approaches in the university.

Let us now consider what students value in assessment through an extract from the 2002 publication "Assessing Learning in Australian Universities".

> Students study more effectively when they know what they are working towards. Students value, and expect, transparency in the way their knowledge will be assessed. They also wish to understand how grades are determined and they expect timely feedback that 1) explains the grade they have received, 2) rewards their achievement, as appropriate, and 3) offers suggestions for how they can improve. Students value assessment tasks they perceive to be 'real': assessment tasks that present challenges to be taken seriously, not only for the grades at stake, but also for the nature of the knowledge and skills they are expected to demonstrate. Students value assessment tasks they believe mirror the skills needed in the workplace. Encouraging students to engage with the curriculum expectations in this way should assist them in becoming more autonomous and independent learners. (James, McInnis and Devlin, 2002)

These reported values, perceptions and desires are totally congruent with the "experiences of autonomy, competence and relatedness" which Ryan and Deci claim need to be nurtured in order to allow the inherent human propensity towards intrinsic

motivation to operate effectively. Thus, if we can create adequate, authentic CRA tasks and tools, ensure they are aligned, explicit and consensually understood within the curriculum as a whole, whilst respecting and acknowledging the reported priorities of the students, then we may see positive learning outcomes as a result of increased intrinsic motivation following the implementation of CRA! This is a major undertaking, "re-positioning student assessment as a strategic tool for enhancing teaching and learning" as James, McInnis and Devlin put it in the 2002 publication. I see this undertaking as an operating factor in what Tom Angelo, a renowned U.S. educationalist, has described as "the transformation of colleges and universities from 'teaching factories' into 'learning communities.' Angelo says:

> In my view, the learning communities ideal and many of its best current manifestations represent a vision worth working toward, not just for assessment but also for educational change efforts in general. Having the construction of learning communities as a goal is quite different from aiming at incrementally improving our present system. It's a whole new ball game. If we accept, at least for the moment, creating productive learning communities as an orienting vision, then our concept of assessment must also change to support that vision.

I believe that this is the kind of inspiration and vision necessary to effectively implement the QUT assessment policy as set out in the M.O.P.P., paragraph 9.1.3. Without adequate resources and leadership, 9.1.3 will only produce cosmetic results which may simply disfigure and distort current practice, producing a "Michel Jackson effect". If we lose the self-correcting mechanism of norm-based grading systems and the replacement Criterion-Referenced systems are inadequate in their tools, processes or implementation, things could get ugly! I have had the benefit of a Teaching

Fellowship to assist, motivate and inspire me on my road to Damascus. My recommendation to the university would be to provide all academic staff with this opportunity to find enlightenment……..or at least to find a method whereby they might successfully implement CRA! Of course, the university's plan in awarding us Teaching Fellowships is that we will provide the guiding light, inspiration, motivation and methodologies to assist our colleagues with the successful implementation of CRA.

So, let me now share with you some processes I have used in devising and implementing CRA in two units which I coordinate!

Community of practice, as many stakeholders as possible + Vanessa Mafe as research assistant

Tom Angelo's idea of a "Teacher's Dozen"; requested from all participating lecturers

Teacher's Dozens + graduate capabilities considerations + unit objectives into unit assessment tasks' criteria

Criteria into assessable, task-specific elements each with five performance standard descriptors

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