

The tried-and-true method of students presenting their work generated in a class means taking materials and putting them in a three-ring binder for a portfolio (Jones; Markel; St. Amant; Scott). The technology-age emphasis on student portfolios shifts the focus to electronic packaging (Barrett, Knadler; Norton-Meier). Ethical and moral considerations are often not addressed. I use scenarios to emulate workplace situations, and challenge students to collaborate on solutions. This process means wrestling with perceived beliefs, but students consider other perspectives in formulating solutions.

When prospective employers seek applicants for positions, I believe that “show and tell” works best. I work with students to develop the following documents for a portfolio:

documents which show professional stature

- letter
- a memo
- a précis
- a résumé

documents which show organizational interaction

- a risk communication document
- an organizational crisis document

documents which show evidence of research abilities

- a proposal
- informational presentation

All these documents are produced in the class and some are peer evaluated, providing the student feedback from someone different than the teacher. While I could simply lecture on the structure of these documents, I feel it is as important to offer students a context for generating and using these documents. I find that scenarios, or contextual situations, can offer students a problem to solve that encourages them to analyze and think critically about the scenario (Kynell and Stone). Whether I use scenarios or simply teach the structure of the portfolio documents, I keep the *multiliteracies approach* in mind.

FRAMING A SCENARIO—THE MULTILITERACIES APPROACH

In order to directly engage the critical and ethical perspectives of students for interrogating a scenario, I provide a structure that uses the multiliteracy pedagogical approach (New London Group), where *overt instruction* and *situated practice* is paralleled with *critical framing* and *transformed practice*. This approach is often emulated in various disciplinary classrooms, and I will only briefly address it here.

STEP ONE: OVERT INSTRUCTION/SITUATED PRACTICE

The use of a scenario calls for initially combining *overt instruction* with *situated practice*. I define “overt instruction” as providing students with specific characteristics to consider about an audience. Discussions about various characteristics in the *overt instruction* step provide students with knowledge about the observations on audience composition. The *situated practice* would provide a heuristic for them to emulate and follow when analyzing audience in the scenario. Here I define “situated practice” as giving students an example or blueprint to use as a general guide for their consideration. It is important to note that the *situated practice* example should be narrowed to help students focus on one aspect of audience, to allow them to examine and understand that particular nuance.

STEP TWO: CRITICAL FRAMING/TRANSFORMED PRACTICE

With the multiple audience response heuristic in mind from the *situated practice*, the students would then *critically frame* their assumptions about audience. I would encourage students to “critically frame” their values and beliefs, by considering other perspectives and beliefs that may not have been introduced to them.

Once the *critical framing* is shaped, the students can respond to the document they have secured, by taking another (and not necessarily the opposite) position. In this instance, I use “transformed practice” as a means to help students develop a process to shape their critically framed assumptions. In this *transformed practice* step, they would also be expected to discuss and analyze the choices they have made when communicating with an audience through their document and why. The pedagogical application of this analysis can contribute to a more thorough understanding of audience in classroom instruction.

STEP THREE: APPLICATION

Using the multiliteracy *overt instruction* supplied by the teacher can guide students to a critical interrogation of a scenario. The purpose of the *situated practice* is to offer a critical lens for considering how the scenario complicates audience by examining different perspectives of the issues at hand. This *situated practice* step can prepare students to *critically frame* how they negotiate perspectives within a social context. Their interrogation of and response to the text can lead them to a *transformed practice* step that encourages them to address audience in a more complex way.

USING THE SCENARIO APPROACH

Once students have become aware of a more complex audience, engaging them with a structured scenario offers a more concrete approach to assessing their expectations and assumptions about the audience. For group projects, the challenge is to identify a situation that permits students to creatively offer a solution, while incorporating key course objective points. In the scenario that follows, I encourage students to address more inclusionary audiences. This

dictates that they attempt to incorporate critical thinking and social consciousness skills with providing a solution for a challenging situation.

THE PROPOSED PROBLEM

The scenario case study was used in one of my classes, whereby the group—identified as “Dallasville Township Historic Association: The Lumber Mill Museum”—was confronted with a situation that exacerbated their fiscal year budget woes. This situation was presented in the form of a court summons. Their group project presentation was to relate the problem and present a proposed solution. The text of the summons is thus:

Case of: Dallasville Township Indian Tribe (First People) vs. The Dallasville Township Historic Association, The Lumber Mill Museum

The plaintiff, Dallasville Township Indian Tribe (First People), hereafter known as Tribe, contends that the defendant, The Dallasville Township Historic Association, The Lumber Mill Museum, hereafter known as Lumber Mill, being a direct business interest of the original lumber mill, is culpable of aggression practices that led to the forced removal of the original inhabitants of the Township.

The Tribe also contends that the original inhabitants, being of a collective cultural nature, sought to share the original landholding with the newly arrived peoples to the area. The Tribe argues that their original ancestors were tricked into selling Tribe property, which those ancestors not only had no intent of doing, but also did not have the authority to do so.

The Tribe also contends that their ancestors were forced to live in an area that was 5% of their original landholdings, and a railway was built to keep the Tribe members from resettling their ancestral lands.

The Tribe is seeking to recover their lost ancestral land, or be properly compensated of \$350 million dollars.

NOTE: Court gossip says that the presiding judge in the case is inclined to rule in favor of the plaintiffs. In order to resolve this case prior to going to court, what can you do to compromise with The Tribe, where at minimum the Lumber Mill retains its standing in the community, and The Tribe recovers their ancestral burial grounds.

THE GROUP'S SOLUTION

The purpose of this scenario is not to frustrate students, but to assess their application of instruction over the course of the semester. The group's solution included discussing the history of the town, and the identification of the current land holdings. Additionally, the group offered to only partially restore the contested land, as the Tribe did not have status as an officially recognized tribe. This information was presented by maps showing the boundaries of the original lands, and the boundaries of the township in relationship to the Tribe's current settlement. In essence, the group considered all points of the problem, and rather than capitulating or being dogmatic, they chose a solution that respected the Tribe's rights, while considering the needs of the current residents. This scenario shows that context is important for examining a problem. Blanket solutions are not the answer, but additional research studies to locate more pragmatic solutions may offer alternatives.

Sources

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