



TEACHING POLITICAL  
SCIENCE SERIES NO 3.

# **How to Motivate and Supervise Students**

**The Experience of First-time University Teachers  
Volume 3**

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**Inga Ulnicane & Katsia Dryven (eds.)**



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# **How to Motivate and Supervise Students**

The Experience of First-time University Teachers  
Volume 3

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**Matthieu Lietaert**

# **Introduction: Bringing Motivation Back into the Classroom and Placing the Focus on Supervision**

*“We know nothing about motivation  
All we can do is write books about it.”*

Peter F. Drucker

This quote by one of the world’s most famous writers on motivation is worth mentioning to start this book. It reminds us that even for those who first brought this notion into the limelight several decades ago; the concept of motivation is hard and complex to understand. In short, much more work needs to be done. This leads me to ask a few questions: shouldn’t we lecturers in the social sciences recognise that motivation is at the very heart of our work? And would it be too much to say that motivating students is one of the lecturer’s responsibilities?

We might have different answers to these questions, but most of us would probably agree that motivation is an important part of the role that we, as lecturers, play on a daily basis. Assuming that every teacher has at least once in their career asked him/herself how to motivate students, it is then constructive to move on to the next step and focus all our efforts on analysing the mechanisms of motivation in relation to our work at university. This is the first goal of the contributors to this project.

This volume is the third of a series dedicated to providing first-time university teachers in the political sciences with bottom-up information and practical reflections on the diversity of our teaching methods. In the first and second volumes, which were published after the meetings in Prague

(2004) and Paris (2005) during the epsNnet annual conference, the issues discussed were about synergy, respect, originality, essay writing, critical thinking and course structure. In this new volume, which is the result of a conference in Budapest (2006), the authors all focus on the notion of motivation as well as on the task of supervising students.

Briefly, the main idea of this series is to give space and answers to the many questions that first-time lecturers are likely to ask when starting their new jobs. Due to the extremely poor training on teaching methods at university, many feel that they are ill-equipped to carry out their task optimally. These volumes are thus designed to integrate a dynamic and bottom-up perspective into the literature on teaching methods that already exists – mainly relevant to the Anglo-American domain.

A few words must also be devoted to the limits and strength of such a project. Some might say that first-time lecturers do not have the sufficient background to write articles on teaching methods. First of all, it must be underlined that senior lecturers and professors have also participated to these volumes. Second, we argue that what can be seen, at first sight, as a lack of experience does not mean a lack of relevance. The aim of the book is to provide readers with a ‘work-in-progress’ textbook rather than a ‘cash-and-carry’ solution. In our opinion, such a ready-made solution simply does not exist as teaching must be flexible and adapted to each specific context.

Therefore, instead of seeing our lack of experience as a “problem,” we see this as an opportunity to improve our teaching. While allowing for our limits and imperfections, we also adopt a positive attitude and focus on our trials and errors so that it can become a very useful source of shared knowledge for a large community of lecturers. Moreover, I am personally happy that so many women participated in this project as academic literature is still very strongly dominated by male scholars. Indeed, it is perhaps no coincidence that they place more importance on the teaching and relational aspect of researcher life, since it is all too often forgotten that our jobs in universities are not only about research and production...

The book consists of four main parts, which are structured in the following way:

Part 1 is an introduction to the issue of motivation from the perspective of three lecturers. In chapter one, Juraj Hvorecký offers his reflections on how the course content, format and examination methods can influence the way students participate in the course. In chapter two, Markéta Rulíková sheds light on two fundamental questions that need to be asked at the beginning of this book: ‘should a lecturer motivate their students?’ and if yes, then ‘what for?’. She then concludes with her personal thoughts on the

fact that stimulating others requires to motivate oneself first. In the last chapter of Part 1, Gabriela Pleschová adds some more useful advice on the motivation of the *lecturer*, by providing positive tools that anyone can use when “zero motivation” moments arise.

In part 2, the aim is to give practical information about methods that can be used to foster motivation in the classroom. Joanna Renc-Roe opens this subdivision with a general reflection on the concept of motivation and argues the case that “solitude in the classroom” should end. In chapter 5, Cătălina Spârleanu stresses the notion of the lecturer’s responsibility in taking into consideration what she calls emotional motivation and the role of positive feedback. Magdaléna Karchová follows in chapter 6, explaining that students’ participation as well as compulsory exercises for those not showing up is a good way to increase their motivation. In chapter 7, Veronika Miřková describes how she prepares the content of her seminars by using relevant information outside mainstream textbooks. She particularly mentions how new technologies, internet in particular, are helpful. Nora Mikuřová concludes this second part by giving some advice on how to teach students from different faculties and departments in the same course.

In Part 3, the authors show how extremely useful it can be to combine motivation and creativity. They recall that there is no single way to motivate and that it is an art in itself that anyone can develop. To start with, Elizabeth Sheppard’s chapter 9 clarifies how simulation can be of use. She explains how students who imitate decision-making or negotiations meetings can better understand what they often see as boring or complex topics. In chapter 10, Anja Hennig and Tomáš Karásek explain how working groups and the new technologies are constructive to stimulate motivation in the classroom. We are pleased to point out that they received the best paper award by the Oxford University Press for this article.

The final part of this book is about supervision. In fact, as any first-time lecturer will face the problem of supervision, it is useful to include this too. In chapters 11 and 12, respectively Paul and Joanna Roe and King Kas present some very interesting observations and advice that should be read by any one starting the hard but pleasant task of supervising. Patrycja Matusz Protasiewicz concludes this fourth part with some constructive comments on supervision and plagiarism.

Before giving the floor to the contributors, we would like to inform the reader that the fourth conference for novice university teachers will take place in Ljubljana on June 22-24, 2007. Two main topics of Ljubljana training will be *Essay writing: How to teach students to write a good essay?* and *Practical illustration to theory: What brings theory to a closer*

understanding for students? We strongly encourage all PhDs in political science and related subjects to join us and share their experience with teaching.

Enjoy the reading...and your teaching!



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# Motivation: Experience

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Juraj Hvorecký

**Motivation As a Challenge – An Experienced Teacher’s View**

Markéta Rulíková

**Motivating Students in the US – An Experienced Teacher’s View**

Gabriela Pleschová

**How to Overcome Bad Times of Own Inspiration Loss**

**Juraj Hvorecký**

## **Motivation As a Challenge**

**- An experienced teacher's view**

This article aims to elucidate a few points concerning issues of motivation in the classroom. Undoubtedly, motivation is one of the most crucial elements of learning, thereby serving an immensely important role in course deliveries. I will discuss the basics of motivation, and concentrate on the components of classes in which motivation is especially needed. I will also offer some advice on how to boost the motivation of students, thereby making teaching more efficient. My paper concentrates on three areas – course format, course content and methods of examination – in each of which some suggested moves can be made in order to promote student motivation. Needless to say, the article is not a scientific study of the topic; rather, it reflects the author's interest in teaching methods and his own observations and in-situ experimentation. It also has to be added that although I have been teaching on and off since 1997, I have mostly been teaching advanced elective courses of my choice in the field of philosophy. Needless to say, students are much more interested and eager to learn in these classes than in introductory general classes. In recent years I have had to teach more introductory classes, but these were again special as they have been designed for American undergraduate students coming to study for a semester in Prague. Nevertheless, I believe that my experiences can be generalized into both a different subject matter (at least across the humanities) and into early year courses.

## Overview

In any classroom setting, two parties have to be motivated for the course to be fully successful. An instructor has to show commitment and readiness to prepare for his/her class in the best possible way. Students also have to be motivated, otherwise the delivery will not be met with proper reception. I will concentrate solely on the motivation of students and possible methods for its strengthening, leaving aside any thoughts about the motivation of the teacher. Undeniably, the instructor's enthusiasm is even more important than any drive to learn on the pupil's side. Even the ambition of the most inspired students, upon an encounter with boring and disinterested professors, can be significantly lessened. All in all, if a teacher is not motivated, both he/she and his/her employer have a serious problem. Self-motivation methods are very subjective and therefore difficult matters to be discussed in any instructive way. All of us have bad days, during which we would rather stay in bed the whole day, forgetting all of our duties forever. Also, we have our own methods to overcome these unwelcome states. As a piece of advice, I can say that when your willingness to skip teaching is growing day by day, it is time to reconsider your career choice.

In the rest of this article, I will assume a full and unquestionable motivation on the instructor's side, and will therefore concentrate on ways in which he/she can motivate the other party in the learning process, the students. Unfortunately, the fact of teaching disinterested students is a nightmare which every teacher knows well. Though one can spend hours in preparing classes, researching resources, designing handouts and collecting information, one can meet blank faces, and a class where there is nobody to listen. This is not to say that one's class is too small; on the contrary, there might be plenty of people sitting, but when no one appreciates one's effort, delivering any course can be hell on Earth. On the other hand, in some classes everyone is involved, discussions are stimulating for everyone (including the instructor) and one wishes the lecture period to be longer. How can one's classes become more like the latter, rather than the former? Can something be done about stimulating curiosity and interest in students?

The basic premise I am adopting in my approach can be summed up in these few words – motivation requires challenge. Making courses challenging in all possible ways is, I believe, the best way of motivating the students. This premise rests on an assumption that there is an intrinsic ambition inside each of us, the ambition to make ourselves better and more knowledgeable. This assumption is not wholly unjustified. After all, our lectures are taking place at various universities where education is voluntary and though there might be a number of students who lack such

ambitions altogether, universities have various means to get rid of them. Indeed, the weeding out of students should target those who demonstrate no ambition and not those who, from a reason or another, find their classes too easy to prepare for and who, therefore, sometimes end up with bad grades.

Once we perceive motivation as a function of challenge, we can further ask what constitutive parts of our courses are susceptible to challenge. When we locate them, it becomes our duty to make them as stimulating as possible. It appears to me that at least three distinctive elements of lecturing and leading seminars are open to improvements in order to become more challenging. They are the form of the class, its content and its exams.

### **Class format**

By the form of the class, I mean the way in which each individual class progresses, what is done when and how the routine of the lecture is established. I often find it instructive to have the seminar as part of the course first, followed by the lecture on the same topic. This way, students have to handle reading materials on their own, often lacking the general background information. Though this can, at times, be frustrating, a careful selection of assigned readings can eliminate the problem. Then, in the lecture period following student presentations, I elucidate issues at the background of our discussion, putting forward general ideas I wanted to introduce in the first place. Naturally, this strategy puts a higher demand on the instructor's shoulders as he/she has to be prepared to negotiate his/her teaching according to the extent the assignment which was taken in by his/her audience. Fortunately, with a bit of practice, this task becomes less demanding than it might originally seem to be.

Seminar presentations of the assigned readings are also done in a bit of an unorthodox manner. I tend to choose two students for each presentation (when given the appropriate incentive, they often volunteer). The arrangement is the following: the first student presents her understanding of the assigned text, usually for 10 to 15 minutes; this is a traditional part where the main ideas of the reading and student's own points can be raised. Then, the second student comments on the first student's understanding, touching on whether the interpretation was correct and the points made by the first speaker were justified. This arrangement serves a double purpose. Picking up on the intrinsic competitiveness of students, this method tends to improve their performance, because students perceive themselves as being challenged. Also, selected students need to meet ahead of class to

discuss what each of them will say, thereby improving social contacts between individuals who otherwise might not get acquainted. In ideal small class settings, each student should take up both roles over the length of the term, however this requirement is hardly ever met. On rare occasions, the second student might openly admit not to have much to say. This might be either due to the first one being extraordinarily good or the second one being a bit dull. Still, my experiences with this method of challenging two students have, however, been overwhelmingly positive – I recall only one such slightly embarrassing incident in several years.

I would recommend another strategy, named an analogical strategy, but only for advanced students. This strategy consists in asking them to review their colleague's papers. This is a tricky approach as some issues about privacy and misuse of information can ruin the enterprise. Therefore, it is best done with two groups, in which individuals comment on the writings of the other group, ideally in a double blind way. Given the small size of many departments, not knowing the author of a reviewed piece might present a difficulty. When you have a reasonable level of trust in your students, this exercise can bear some needed fruits. Students learn to uncover problems in argumentation, precision and style and even manage to improve formal features of their own work. Some caution should apply, as we definitely don't want students to interfere much with our grading. Mutual paper reviews should only serve pedagogical purposes.

## **Course content**

Unlike making slight changes in the course format, the fact of making the content of the course challenging, and thus motivating student's curiosity, is a long term project which usually requires a radical change in the curriculum. Many traditionally designed courses are intrinsically boring and have an extremely predictable content and banal story line, in which everyone knows who the bad guy is after the first chapter. In order to make my courses more challenging, interesting and entertaining, I follow a few rules: I avoid textbooks and my courses are neither historical, nor encyclopedic. These rules are naturally overly simplistic: indeed I often use textbooks, teach historical courses and I can't avoid teaching introductory courses that are always a bit encyclopedic. When I am talking about avoiding these vices, I have in mind a more specific target.

As often as I can recall, all introductory classes into almost anything I took began with some sketches of the early Greek history of the subject, gradually moving through dark Middle ages into the bright modern world, ending with a more detailed discussion of important last century figures. I believe this

approach is wrong: whatever discipline one teaches, its subject matter is constituted by the *problems* which are inherent to it, rather than by an ordering of the historical figures pertaining to it and their writings. It is because problems, not figures present a challenge. The very reason our disciplines of study came to be was in search of a solution to a problem (or to a set of problems). It is the problem, not its historical progression, that makes us do our research. The following example will, hopefully, illustrate my point.

Recently, I was asked to teach an Introduction to Philosophy course at the Economic University in Prague. The head of the department had mailed me the syllabus of the previous instructor. I was horrified by a single glance at it. Even without being acquainted with the environment in which I would be teaching the course, I was assuming that the economy students would be rather reluctant to take philosophy courses, and it is a mandatory course for their curriculum which they, therefore, have no say in taking.

In this relatively hostile setting, the syllabus contained very historical and some fairly obscure figures as if taken from an old-fashioned textbook. It is exactly in this context and type of course when one has to motivate students by its content, otherwise it will turn into a weekly two hour long session of suffering. There are certainly more interesting topics for young economists than whether the Being is One or Plenty. Issues of the existence of God, free will, liberty, abortion or thinking machines are as philosophical as any hardcore metaphysics, but they also strongly attractive to the public eye.

When discussing history, lecturers should put emphasis on the difficulty of the question asked, rather than on the sometimes trivial answers offered by our ancestors. Moreover, old answers are trivial only when we adopt a very simplified view of our past. It is the duty of an instructor in any history class to elucidate various limiting factors that inspired authors of a given era to write what they did. Furthermore, the practice of studying history by starting with ancient Greeks and following the arrow of the time until the present gives the students, in my opinion, a mistaken idea that there is nothing to be learnt from history as it is all long obsolete. As anybody closely familiar with ancient texts will tell you, these represent a wonderful array of valuable insight, which we largely tend to overlook today. History should be taught as a source of inspiration and not as something to be quickly forgotten.

My avoidance of textbooks springs from my considerations about the nature of university studies. Every student can pick up an introductory book or two from her field and learn basics on his/her own. Our role as teachers is not to duplicate the role of introductory readings, but rather to expand the horizons of students' views. This can be done by either

providing more detailed information than any textbook can do, or by coming forward with radically different interpretations of traditional issues. The first possibility mentioned, which consists of emphasizing details, can be instructive though it often leads to the flooding of pupils with data which they have difficulty absorbing and sorting out in their minds - this is why I avoid encyclopedias. In my opinion, if students wish to learn more, they can look for additional information in these tools without expecting teachers to provide encyclopedic information. This obviously doesn't mean that the teacher should not welcome questions from his students, however encyclopedic these might be. Still, when designing a course, feel free to stress your own preferences, neglecting sometimes traditionally recognized views. If students feel an important piece of information was omitted or improperly delivered, they have a right to ask – then, you have to be able to defend your choice, or to encourage students to find it for themselves (we can't be expected to provide the full service).

In light of searching for motivational factors, I have found that the practice of bringing forward controversial issues is much more productive than that of supplying students with a steady load of encyclopedic knowledge. Whenever we can show that a received “truth” could be rationally undermined, we engage students' imagination and challenge their accepted beliefs. In any one of us, such disturbing news provokes a defensive reaction that makes us develop better argumentation for our own views. Such an urge motivates us to rethink our principles which in turn strengthens our theories and advances us in the subject matter. Certainly, this is the essence of learning.

### **Challenging exams**

My final comments are directed at what is often seen as the final part of our encounters with students – their examination. One might think that multiple choice and essay exams are as good as anything else, but my recent experience shows the opposite. Recently, I was teaching a very gifted group of American students and realized that standard methods of examination would only tell me what I already knew. I decided to come up with a tricky test: instead of the usual in-class essay writing, I assigned the students with a take-home assignment in which they needed to write a short essay in response to one of three questions which I elaborated. The major limitation of this assignment was purely formal: the students were not to write more than 250 words. Though this seems easy, it can in fact be very challenging. Such a strong limitation on wording makes students think twice – about the content and the scope of their essay. No rubbish is allowed and each

sentence has to be judged on its own. The questions were not extremely difficult, they pertained to reading assignments which we had discussed together during the course (for example: How does Lukaszewicz argue against determinism?). In fact, they were not much different from what I would normally ask during in-class essay writing. The result was surprisingly positive. Both parties were happy – I had received some of the best papers I have ever read and my students greatly appreciated this change (they even indicated it strongly in their class evaluations). Incidentally, despite being a take-home assignment, this method easily avoids a threat of plagiarism as the content is in an unusual form.

Open book and oral exams are other examples of very motivating methods to assess students. Open book examinations give students a false indication of charity or lenience on the side of the instructor, when in fact there is none. My first experience with open book exams came during my undergraduate years in the US when one very good teacher announced her exams to be done exclusively in this way. I was struck by confusion and could not comprehend why one would somebody allow the usage of textbooks during the exam period. The answer came quickly – I myself didn't even bother to look into the book during essay writing: once you know what to answer, no outside help is needed. Other, less prepared kids were desperately trying to locate the answer in their open books, usually with no success. By providing this wrong signal, the availability of the class textbook opens the door for students to implicitly undervalue the expected stress of the exam. Only when actually writing their essay do the students realize that they had underestimated the challenge, forcing them to invest more effort when writing their exam.

Oral exams are notoriously difficult to administer and present serious liability and assessment problems. Overcoming these problems might be complicated, but this format gives instructors unprecedented access to students' thinking and general presentation habits. As a colleague of mine used to say, you can tell after one minute of presentation the extent of preparation the student put into his/her presentation. Oral exams are naturally suitable only for small groups, work especially well when one's group is stratified and when good/talkative students were dominating the class sessions. One-to-one exams give the instructor time to better know their students and to carefully target questions in accordance to their actual performance. On the other hand, these types of assessments can be time consuming and can potentially lead to an implicit bias towards students who are not outspoken and who prefer written presentations of their thoughts. Still, I believe a balanced oral examination is possible and could be more informative than any other method.

## **Conclusion**

By understanding motivation as a challenge and by dissecting my class into elements that can be made challenging, I am hoping to make my students better thinkers and better experts in their fields. It is my belief that when we, as teachers, know that some element of our delivery is impeding students' learning, we have a duty to alter it for the better. In the above essay, I have attempted to illustrate my effort with some particular examples pertaining to class format, its content and various methods of examination. All my alterations were made in order to get the best out of my students, to discover their hidden potential and to make my teaching more pleasant for my pupils as well as for myself. Along similar lines, other ideas are surely in the heads of my colleagues. Mine is only a modest contribution to the ongoing debate concerning the replacement of passive learning with more active, student-oriented approaches.

**Markéta Rulíková**

## **Motivating Students in the US**

**- An experienced teacher's view**

In my paper I would like to share a portion of my two-year experience with teaching sociology at three different American colleges (undergraduate level) in New Hampshire. I had an opportunity to teach both at state as well as private colleges. Even though the financial aspect that typically makes the difference between public and private schooling in the US remains outside the scope of my today contribution, we should be aware of the fact that there are patterns of relations between social background and the attitudes, expectations, and motivations of students attending 'cheap' or 'expensive' undergraduate colleges in the United States. To some degree I intuitively feel the difference in motivations of the two groups, yet I have not developed different approaches to them. What follows are my own deliberations on whether and if so how to motivate students at college and university level towards their study.

### **Should we at all motivate?**

The topic of today's session is addressed to the first-time university teachers and asks a straightforward question: how to motivate students? However, let us take one step back and consider whether at all a university teacher is expected to motivate his/her students. Isn't it that a teacher stands in front of a group of adult individuals who took a mature decision to study at university, who come to the classroom in search of knowledge and/or practical skills? Isn't it that students have all the freedom and right to leave university as soon as they lose motivation and willingness and

pursue some other goals in their lives? Such liberal approach would even seem compatible with the liberal arts modules of many American colleges and the spirit of university education in general.

These provoking questions are quite legitimate and I have come to my own answer in a rather tricky manner: a teacher should indeed invest his/her efforts in motivating students but this decision has to be realized with proper intentions. To be sure, student motivation should not just be happening (not to mention be restrained) in line with institutional prescript. Student motivation should even not resemble any obtrusion on students. Rather I understand that active involvement in student motivation should be attempted as a means of one's self-improvement as a teacher. By trying to positively influence students' approach towards, and work for, the course one becomes a better teacher. Teaching is not only about possessing knowledge but also about the ability to pass it. In addition, a good quality teacher demonstrates if s/he manages to win students over for the subject. If student motivation is understood in this 'individualistic' perspective, it will bring personal satisfaction to a teacher and as a "byproduct of primary significance" it will improve the outcome of education.

### **Motivate to what?**

If agreeing on the need for active involvement in student motivation, a logical question follows: motivate to what? For the beginning I limited myself to just a few areas. I focused on how to make the difference in students' coming to the class (bodies), being active during class debates (minds), and actual studying (minds). There is one more ambition of a higher rank – which typically takes a longer time to figure out a strategy for achieving – and that is how to win students for the subject (souls).

A minimal requirement is to make students come to classes. It is a prerequisite for further interactions with students that gives a teacher the very opportunity to educate and – in our context - pursue the other areas of motivation. This goal has been practically solved for many US college teachers since it is "strongly recommended" that teachers include class attendance among formal requirements for passing the course. Such an approach is usually quite effective in terms of high class attendance. However, in the above proposed physiological terminology, we get bodies, not necessarily minds, not to mention souls of our students. Clearly, full success is guaranteed only if a teacher gains all three spheres of his/her students.

The best way how to motivate students to come to one's classes is to be appealing, interesting, and useful. Well-presented and compelling class

content and well-elaborated class dynamics, no doubt, enhance students' interest in the subject. While teachers are relatively limited in modifying the course content to students' wishes, diversifying learning options (class dynamics) is a powerful strategy. A variety of activities during every session (i.e. discussions, group/pair activities, video, team homework with presentations, joint seminar paper reviews and the like) helps keep every class different and therefore unpredictable and therefore intriguing.

Making students actively involved in the classroom is another challenge. It is particularly successful if a teacher relates the study material to students' lives. There are plenty of opportunities to do so. Or at least there are in the field of sociology. Say, why not explain the negative informal sanctions of a group on gossiping among peers? It is not to say that the entire lecture or seminar should be accommodated to students' wishes. That would be counterproductive to the goal of widening their horizons. But occasional references to students' areas of interest will certainly help in gaining their attention, recognition, and understanding. It needs to be said that such a strategy entails an enormous effort to investigate young people's subcultures which in my case was multiplied by the cultural gap of a foreigner.

A useful trick how to make a silent class debate the issue of the day is to stick to "wait time": after asking a question the teacher should remain silent until someone in the classroom takes the responsibility to break the silence. It is a common fear of particularly first-time teachers to leave too much space 'empty' but it is surprisingly efficient way of making students speak. Oftentimes, as soon as one starts talking the rest of the previously passive audience gets gradually involved too. Understandably, the more inspiring, controversial, and intriguing questions or readings are provided to students, the more valuable debate comes out.

There are, however, moments when even golden rules about how to integrate students into discussions will not work. I would like to touch upon a specific problem of "group think" mechanism that might negatively affect overall students' engagement in class, including the lack of cooperation during class discussions. Sometimes, a small group of dissatisfied but outspoken individuals occur in the class and through their group authority they manage to spread the negative attitude towards the teacher and 'spoil' the class atmosphere. There is relatively little blame on the teacher. One may teach a different group the same topic in the same way, yet the outcome might be satisfactory without the negative fluid. No doubt, a teacher who deals with negative "group think" faces an extremely difficult challenge.

## **Motivating others is foremost huge self-mobilization**

Motivating others is hard work in oneself. It calls for self-reflection. A good teacher has to ask him/herself: ‘am I clear, convincing, helpful, entertaining, reasonable (or whatever the intention is)?’ The challenge for first-time teachers is that they typically concentrate on their class performance which absorbs most of their energy. Responsibly, they spend plenty of time preparing study material (including overhead charts and PowerPoint), make sure they try to have answers to most (if not all) potential questions. The preoccupation with self sometimes hinders a new teacher from having more interaction with students, from finding out and reflecting on their interests, needs, intellectual abilities, personal problems, etc. Even if it might feel overwhelming at the start of a teaching career to include also intensive interaction with students, a well prepared educator should realize that teaching is a partnership process and the result greatly depends on good cooperation of both sides.

A sensitive person can certainly herself come up with a lot of ideas for self-improvement. Yet, I would like to pinpoint the significance of student evaluations. They are an extremely valuable source of feedback and every teacher should be attentive to their content. There is always something that can be done better next semester. Also, if one gets the impression that negative “group think” has penetrated the class it is highly recommended to use informal mid-semester student evaluation in order to try to intervene to this unfortunate development.

Unfortunately, the otherwise useful student evaluations might be institutionally misconduct. It is a very controversial idea of most American colleges to include student evaluations among criteria for job maintenance and promotion. It might motivate teachers to better performance. But it also contributes to devaluating this undoubtedly useful tool of feedback to a political instrument. Not only that teacher oftentimes resign from their teaching standards and demands in exchange for favorable assessment, what is more students – aware of the power of evaluations – use them for forcing their postulates. Also I was a witness of a regrettable situation when students boycotted semester evaluations in order to restrain a popular professor’s firing.

**Gabriela Pleschová**

## **How to Overcome Bad Times of Own Inspiration Loss?<sup>1</sup>**

Most teachers dream about having a class of students devoted to the subject, full of original questions and deep interest to discover answers to them. Moreover, the students should be ready to study hours and days and later to share knowledge in the classroom.

However, most students are not like this. Rather, they are normal people with different interests, no clear vision of what they will do after graduation, but exploring what does interest and make them content in their lives. So the important task of the teacher remains to continuously motivate and challenge his/her students. Experienced teachers accept that as normal and feel satisfied when they succeed to meet this aim. Lewis Elton (2001) speaks of three kinds of student interests:

- The self/interest in passing examinations, which teachers must never devalue. It is one in which students naturally take the lead.
- Interest in the subject, which is primarily a task for teachers to develop.
- Interest in developing abilities which will be of value long after leaving formal education.

It is also common that the teacher is confronted during the term with a wide range of problems which are rarely solved with a hundred percent

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank both editors for their comments to the draft of this paper as well as Joanna Renc-Roe for her valuable advice.

satisfaction. Some challenge might make him/her fail, which can be complicated by other problems the teacher meets as a researcher or in the family life. It can happen that at the end of a semester or even throughout the school year if the teacher feels disappointed, tired and even depressed. In this situation, it is rather difficult to continue motivating students.

In this paper, I will discuss some instruments that can aid against diminishing motivation, which from time to time happens to every educator. Personal experiences and references to literature on teaching in higher education will be the major resource for the paper. This discussion will not focus on solving particular situation but rather on continuous motivation fostering and rebuilding process.

### **Deep interest in the subject itself**

People usually become university teachers after having been excellent students who still find profound interest in some subject of research. Jan Parker (2002) offers the following explanation: “For Humanities disciplines the core is the critical, mutual engagement with humanities’ texts. This often passionate engagement is what draws students to study the discipline and teachers to teach it.” This statement can be applied to political science as well as other disciplines.

Moreover, many beginning educators wish to pass what they have learnt themselves to their younger colleagues. They find teaching a beneficial and noble profession which provides people with inspiration, guidance and encouragement. Additionally, there is the challenge to use more efficient or creative methods of teaching in order to meet the needs of contemporary society. What often stimulates someone to become a university teacher is influence that some extraordinary teacher has had on their lives. However, a significant factor is the desire and deep interest one has in teaching as a career and its vehicle to transfer knowledge to students. The intensity of this interest can vary, but it has to be present or otherwise one can hardly be an inspiring educator. D. Currie (2000 in Elton 2001) speaks of teachers ‘exposing’ themselves to their students instead of exposing the subject to them.

Young teachers sometimes have to teach courses which are more or less different than the focus of their research. What helps is a good preparation: including pieces the teacher has found truly interesting into the list of seminar readings, encouraging students to bring materials to the lessons which they find original and fascinating and express appreciation to such student activity, etc. If possible, the teacher should integrate some issues of his/her research into the course syllabi. It usually comes natural to apply

previous knowledge when teaching topics the educator is not absolutely familiar. As Agnieszka Weiner (2005, 107) has stressed, students' interest and performance encourages further impetus of the teacher, too.

### **Reasonable load on the shoulders**

Besides the interest in the subject of teaching, it is crucial to set realistic goals of the course. In other words, before beginning of the semester it is worthwhile to spend a few more hours in order to prepare a balanced syllabus. The teacher must calculate rationally how much time and efforts he/she can spend preparing for each lesson, counseling students and evaluating their performance. But not only is that essential, one should always have some time reserved for problems which might appear, and can be rather time and energy consuming.

When preparing the syllabi, I have often been faced the problem of making a very strict plan for the semester and having the course as challenging and interesting as possible. Nevertheless, experience has taught me that there will always be additional problems. Some examples of this include: late submission of final papers, complications with students who intend to spend the next semester abroad through the Erasmus program and need special attention, and requests of students or even parents to explain the grading process. In addressing these problems, I have repeatedly had to draw upon all of my personal strength and professional capacity. This is an example of what so often leads to teacher's dissatisfaction and to the loss of motivation.

### **Thorough analysis of the problem**

If a serious problem happens during the semester, a careful reflection on the issue is very important. My first semester of full-time teaching at the university was a painful experience. Although a balanced and interesting syllabus about the Central Europe had been prepared, up to one third of the students refused to read the assigned materials. They were coming unprepared to the seminars and their participation in the discussions was very weak. Their position papers were too short and without the necessary insight, sometimes they simply copied articles from the internet.

One should not expect all students to prepare well for the lesson even at better schools. However, in my first semester of teaching I could see effective teaching taking place when only two thirds of the class studied. The rest of students showed no enthusiasm about what they have read and were not particularly keen on expressing their critical views. There were

just two or three students who wished to debate. When I asked questions and tried to involve more students, their answers were either too short or lacked very basic knowledge of the topic. This was especially striking because I find motivating people to feel comfortable by group activities including the debate as one of my strengths.

At the end of the semester, the director of the institute informed me that the students wrote a petition where they claimed my requirements too high and my teaching competences inadequate. In the student feed-back forms almost all students evaluated the course as uninteresting, too difficult and the teacher as unskilled. Moreover, two students wrote a letter appealing to the dean.

During the semester, I observed the problems with the class, but neither decreasing the number of pages students had to read for the seminar from 30 to 20 (texts were mostly in students' native language), verbal encouragements to participate, nor giving extra points for debating improved the situation. At the end of the semester I felt awful. My disappointment was quite strong as I had spent as much time as possible preparing course materials, reading weekly position papers, counseling students and grading final papers. Many times I arrived at school at 6:30 a.m., and left around 6:00 p.m.

When I analyzed the course difficulties I identified two main reasons. Firstly, course assignments and methods were very different from what students experienced at their high school and even during their first year of undergraduate study. Before, they were mainly asked to read, remember and repeat at the exam. On the contrary, at my seminar students were expected to read, critically reflect and express their opinion in a written form. This is much more difficult and students were little trained for that. What my lessons lacked was constant explaining *why* such assignment is so important for them. I expected students would grasp it quickly when I explained that at the first lesson. Actually, they did not. For most of them the tasks were too difficult and they did not have enough motivation for improving their undeveloped skills.

Secondly, the problem was with particular students in the group. Now, after teaching eight different groups of students I can discern that in that initial class six students out of sixteen were extraordinarily weak. As they saw their low marks from position papers and zero points from class participation they blamed the teacher, not themselves. I clearly told them that without improvement of performance they will not pass the course. Two students came to consultations. We discussed their papers and one of them improved and could get the credits. But the others were self-confident, sometimes even rude. They expected that they would pass since it was a practice of the institute to offer courses for first-year students that are taught by external teachers who mostly give good marks.

## Change in the following semester

What I changed for the next term was explaining to students the reasons of my methods, assignments and assessment, and underlined how concretely students would be expected to improve their skills. Since that, I am doing it at every course. I have been explaining that at the seminars and I define it in much detail in the syllabus. It still happens that students do not get good marks, especially when handing out their first essay. But in the paper, they always find my written comments. Moreover, they can come to consultations so they can improve when submitting another essay. And they usually do.

The first lesson in the semester begins with a long power point presentation. Any course requirement is tightly connected to its reasons. Students are made aware that if they have more than two abstentions, they can not pass the course. They are reminded that the semester has just 12 weeks which includes holidays and the opening lesson. If they miss two classes there will be only just seven class meetings remaining. How can they learn something fundamental in six weeks or less? I also stress that learning is based on scholarly debate and learning takes place every lesson and not just at the end of semester. How can a student who was not present at school (even due to illness) deserve to pass the course?

Student papers are connected to skill sets designed to meet certain criteria for the class. For example, if a topic of paper is intended to be analytical, i.e. to ask *why* instead of *how* something happened, students are told they should learn more than to describe some event but to analyze, read and think critically as well as develop their own creativity.

I underline how important is to form one's own opinion instead of repeating the opinion of other people. In the media, they can so often hear fast conclusions without necessary reasoning. When writing the paper, students can slowly consider the problem, put the arguments together and reformulate ideas which will help them to improve in techniques of discussion with friends. In a course on International Relations (IR), students are challenged to know as much about IR as their friends from the natural sciences. Do they know better? Can they achieve that just by reading daily newspapers? Do they know if scholars in their papers explain the problems more reasonably than journalists?

Most importantly, I am telling the students the "awful truth" about adapting good study habits. They have to study hours and days and devote much time and energy in order to improve considerably. They are encouraged to do their best and strive to succeed. This is an important principle with every significant thing one tries to accomplish in their lives. I tell them that I am ready to help and encourage them as much as I can (see also Sorokos 2005, 13).

For me, it is not easy to speak so openly, especially about unpopular issues. I can easily praise people but it is difficult to look into their eyes and tell them “a bad piece of news.” But when I was sweat and kind at the beginning of the semester students realized just at the end of term that my requirements were strict and they would not get the mark easily. Now I find it much better to start as demanding and not the beloved teacher. Students seem to understand better what and how they should learn.

I try to understand the students’ reasons. In our educational system, many teachers still require memorizing and find it more difficult or unpopular to give worse marks. Also, when freshmen students realize that they have just five courses per semester, they find part-time job or assign at another faculty instead of expecting more self-study requirements. Their view can be considerably changed in one day. And this strategy works rather well. I still remember the day when I was standing in front of the students. I had already graded all final papers and told students that they could download them from the website together with my comments. However, they urged me to read their names and marks in that particular lesson. I did not have much confidence as the marks were not excellent and quite a lot of students received E or F. However, I asked everybody to respond according to the remarks on the papers. I also stressed my belief that each student could improve considerably when improving the paper. In that moment I felt a lot of respect from the students. They understood that what they got was more than a mark and they appreciated my detailed comments instead of receiving just the grades.

## **Ongoing diary**

Another technique that helps to analyze the problems and challenges of teaching is to maintain an ongoing diary. When initially confronting difficulties, the teacher might quickly forget many things that were positive about his/her course. The teacher might feel disappointed because of tasks that could not be successfully fulfilled. Such a feeling can carry on till the end of semester and even afterwards. What I have been using both for my self-motivation and also for the realistic evaluation of the whole course is the ongoing diary of course implementation.

In fact, this ongoing diary is a one page with two columns attached at the notice-board in front of my desk. I can see it every day. Here I write what happened at the lesson (both negative and positive experiences from the classroom; what worked; and what flopped). It might be discussing a certain topic, the reaction of students to some activity, or the level of students’ preparation, team work, etc. The diary also stimulates my

willingness to prepare good lessons. It also aids with quite a lot of other activities to be aware of that may impact my teaching responsibilities.

### **Feedback questionnaire and self-evaluation**

One of the most constructive tools for stimulating teacher's motivation is student's feedback. But sometimes it is not that easy to get responses to complex matters. For instance, feed back to the faculty is composed of a form with more than 40 questions where students pick one of five boxes ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement. Because of quantity and similarity of questions, and a desire to respond as fast as possible, students pick boxes without proper consideration and hardly any of them write something to the last and only open question. Moreover, their answers to similar questions are many times very different. The last disadvantage of these forms is that they are not electronic.

The key factor of having rather high response rate by electronic questionnaire is asking just several questions and moreover, sending them when most students are still at school. My own personal email questionnaire to students is comprised of just four questions:

- 1) What has been in your opinion the main contribution of the course for you?*
- 2) What did you most dislike/miss at the course?*
- 3) How interesting were the topics and materials according to your opinion?*
- 4) What have you found positive at the style of teacher's instruction?*

*Please, state any other comment you would like to add.*

*Thank you for answering these questions. This shall help me to be a better teacher next semester.*

Unfortunately, last semester I had very small response when I gave a rather late deadline for submitting the final papers. Many students submitted the essays on the day of the deadline, and more than half of them had to resubmit a second time. My e-mail reached some students already taking their holidays and some during the rewriting process. On the other hand, a year ago, when students submitted final papers a week or 10 days earlier, I received many feedback e-mails with detailed answers, support and interesting suggestions.

After reading student responses I always put them on the course website together with my reactions to some of them. Students can read the questions and my responses even if they do not have my class next semester or discuss

their concerns in person. Furthermore, I believe it makes the course more transparent for the new students in the following terms.

In general, I have many times experienced encouragement from student reactions. They have valued some activities or classroom emphasis that I did not pay enough attention to, or simply overlooked. Moreover, they were really serious in their advice and creative in their proposals of what to change or add. In the future, I would like to increase the number of feedback opportunities by asking students to write their comments at the last class session. I would try to explain to them how important their feedback is and encourage them to think a bit more before writing their response. After responding to my questions I will give them the faculty forms. The university's Vice Dean will also be consulted about changing the faculty questionnaires.

Students will be asked to type their most important answers into computer, with the intent of placing them on the course. This might increase student ownership of what they have done and what they have learned from the course. Of course, this complex feedback can also be obtained through discussion with students during the last lesson. However, I do not find it easy to create a favorable environment for free exchange of ideas which would involve all the students. Additionally, at the end of each semester, I will require a written self-evaluation of each course. It is often encouraging to read once again what was good and to sum up the interesting ideas for the next course. Seeing such a conscious summary helps me to overcome unclear feelings and to transform them into analysis and ideas for the next term.

### **Applying others' experience**

Another strong tool recommended for developing teacher motivation is engaging in constructive discussions with experienced colleagues. They can often give valuable advice from similar experiences they may have faced in their careers. A particular approach would involve approaching foreign colleagues who stay at our faculty for one or more semesters through the Fulbright program, Erasmus scheme, or other similar programs. I also benefit from conferences and training seminars on teaching skills where I can discuss problems with beginning teachers. They often share the same problems as well as failures and offer many creative ideas and courage. Every year it is possible to participate at the trainings organized by the European Political Science Network. Other excellent trainings are also offered by universities, such as the Curriculum Resource Center of the Central European University (<http://www.ceu.hu/crc>) or by several British universities.

## Relax

Finally, what is especially important for developing teacher's motivation is a true rest during vacation. As educators, we need to make time to relax after the semester. After several days of "doing nothing," which I always allot time to do for myself semester is over, I then appreciate taking time to do other things that are enjoyable. Sports, such as mountain tracking, long-distance running, cycling etc. can make one feel exhausted due, but also rejuvenate the mind and spirit.

This summer, I climbed Mount Grossglockner and had a similar feeling of accomplishment like that which comes with teaching. I did something difficult and challenging. I feared because my competences were worse than I wished. Staying with a friend on a rock 3780 meters above the sea, we missed the summit by only 20 meters. We had to return as we lacked the rope to continue and we wanted to have some strength for the descent. It was terrifying and positive at the same time. I could never understand the value of this trip without experiencing storms, depressive rains and exhaustion in the past. I did not need to get to the top of the summit the first time. It was enough to know that on the next occasion I would be better prepared and perhaps, I would have more courage, too.

After such a supporting occurrence, it is possible to dream again about being a superior teacher. Similarly enriching activity can be traveling or reading books about extraordinary people who can again and again surprise the reader that no one attains success without overcoming challenges.

Teaching, as any other job, should be accompanied by joy and satisfaction. The fact that problems arise is very normal and itself does not lead to dissatisfaction. The trick is to learn by responding to challenges. In other words, a teacher's driving force has to be constantly reinforced. In conclusion, the basic tools which may help in this process involve keeping a true interest in the subject of teaching, putting reasonable load on one's own shoulders, analyzing problems, making improvements in structuring courses, keeping an ongoing teaching diary, collecting student feedback and, last but not least, taking time to relax. I wish all beginning educators much success, which is always the strongest form of motivation.

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# Motivation: Methods

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Joanna Renc-Roe

**Motivation as Engaged Learning – An Experienced Teacher’s View**

Cătălina Spârleanu

**Positive Feedback as Means to Motivate Students or “I Go to Classes, Because I Feel That I’m Important”**

Magdaléna Karchová

**Small Tests and Compulsory Compensation for the Non-participation in Lesson**

Veronika Mit’ková

**Using Supplementary Materials for the Course**

Nora Mikušová

**Motivating Students in Quantitatively Oriented Classes**

**Joanna Renc-Roe**

# **Motivation As Engaged Learning**

## **- An experienced teacher's view**

### **Introduction**

This paper offers some personal reflections on the topic of motivation and teaching. The comments and observations are based on the writer's readings and experiences; not so much in teaching but in training, supporting and consulting innovative and scholarly teachers. The best examples referenced come from numerous lecturers that the writer has talked to and worked with, sometimes visiting their classrooms and interviewing students, sometimes reading reports of their own research into their courses. Another source includes the published work of educational researchers and scholars on the subject of teaching and learning.

The issue of motivation a particularly fruitful, complex and challenging one as it relates to student learning, reading and professional practice. As an 'educationalist', the writher's contribution to this discussion will be more general; offering conceptualizations, questions and outlining what can be potentially viewed as 'good practice'. Some examples will be offered of what has been documented to work elsewhere, and might be useful in teaching political science. One conceptualization substitutes motivation with engagement. The writer finds that motivation is an important concepts, but difficult to grasp when talking about the practice of teaching and the practices of teachers. Engagement and engaged learning, on the other hand, is observable in classroom practices and products of students. Engagement in the learning process is difficult to achieve. However, it is an important goal if the focus is on achieving excellence in teaching, and successful

student learning, particularly among adult university learners. Despite this preference, and before going into examples, a few issues connected with motivation and teaching will be briefly discussed.

### **The professional context**

One approach to the issue of student motivation is that it never occurs in isolation. It is directly related to teacher' motivation; the teaching act being a social and communicative experience and undertaken by concrete individuals in a particular university context. It is pointless to talk about motivated students if motivated teachers are not factored into the equation.

One important source of a lack of motivation in teachers is inadequate respect for the teaching profession. This is often based on simplistic notions of the supposed easiness of teaching and lack of adequate theoretical knowledge base of teachers in general. The favorite professional comparison in this line of argument is with the medical profession, and teachers rarely come on top in the comparison. Some literature on this point of view suggests that:

Knowledge of the working of the brain required for a career in brain surgery contrasts with the relatively non-abstract and easy to acquire knowledge of the applied psychology of learning allegedly required for a career in teaching (Winch 2004, 182).

This sort of analysis does a lot of damage to teacher motivation and deemphasizes the field of teacher education. Unfortunately, this perception is also present in higher education where teaching is considered less rewarded and less prestigious than disciplinary research. Contrary to such views, there are studies that suggest that teaching demands a highly complex professional knowledge base mediated through practice (Loughran, Mitchell and Mitchell 2003). Teaching, to put it simply, is as complex in practice as is the work of any other professional such as a physician, an architect or a graphic designer.

Lee Shulman, a Stanford education professor and a life-long researcher of teaching at all levels, who also spent years researching the medical profession, holds a view that:

The more time I spend in classrooms with teachers -talking to them, observing, watching videotapes, talking some more, reflecting on my own teaching- the more I peel off layer after layer of incredible complexity. (...) In fact, when I compared the complexity of teaching with that much more highly rewarded profession, 'doing medicine' I concluded that the only time

medicine ever approaches the complexity of an average day of classroom teaching is in an emergency room during a natural disaster. (Shulman 2004a, 504).

Pursuing Shulman's, rather than Winch's analogy, teaching is very much like treating thirty or more patients all at once. Therefore, motivating students by teachers is like treating these patients holistically, individually, with alternative treatments considered, patient-doctor hierarchy dismantled, and long-term rehabilitation plans prescribed. Motivating students adds another layer to the understanding of teaching practice as 'managing complexity' and makes generalizations very difficult. But one thing is sure, teachers need to actually acknowledge the complexity of their job and be sure of their professional status.

### **The institutional context**

The discussion will now turn briefly to the context of the teaching situation; the 'hospital ward' where teaching takes place. Teaching does not occur in an institutional (nor, as we have discovered, social) vacuum. Everything from university management and administration structures, through the infrastructure such as libraries, computer labs and classrooms, will contribute to or prevent motivating students.

There are numerous stories of 'self-selected', mature graduate students feeling unmotivated or even depressed the moment they enter the university classroom. In some universities it turns out that course descriptions or syllabi are not available to students, the lecturers have no time for consultations, office hours are not posted, or no office exist in which to hold such consultations. Sometimes teachers can only be met if they are 'hunted down' in the corridor on their way to class. Even the most enthusiastic students will lose motivation if routinely met with lack of student support services, unhelpful administrators and librarians, and uneasy access to resources or staff.

As an example of a teacher's voice on this subject, one anonymous participant of a workshop on innovative teaching methods responded that: 'How can [the lecturer] remain motivated to apply all these methods, techniques etc. in the situation when: the whole atmosphere of the department/ faculty is not very encouraging for a creative approach, (...) when your teaching isn't supported by a way of teaching provided by other professors'. Another teacher wrote: "a particular challenge is engaging students in meaningful discussions and motivating them to study in an environment that is not conducive to learning (a failed educational system) and where no connection exists between education/ degree and future jobs."

These are difficult issues, and beyond the scope of the individual lecturer to cope with or change. But, it is a responsibility of the professional to be an agent and co-author of change in education rather than just a recipient of decisions which will affect their classroom. Thus, another key to success in motivating students is remaining mindful and critical of the limitations to good practice posed by the institutional context or educational system in order to know when and how to rise above them and promote change.

Having recognized the influence of the professional and educational context, the focus of this paper will now turn to general concepts and good practices in motivating students.

### **Conditions and forms of motivation**

According to Spaulding (1992), what students bring to the classroom are different initial expectations: the internal (or academic motivation) linked directly to the subject is only present among the minority. This is more common among mature students who have made a conscious decision to select a given course or degree, and perhaps particularly widespread among postgraduate, doctoral students, and active researchers as ‘expert learners’. However, many undergraduate students come to the class with the ‘external motivation’ consisting of grades, diplomas, stipends or other future rewards gained through high marks or the diploma. Some students develop a resourceful strategic approach, and are able to become internally motivated only when it is necessary for achieving their external goals!<sup>1</sup>

What can help bring students closer to the subject matter, thus increasing their degree of internal motivation? There are two main conditions that Spaulding (1992) cites as influences to motivation: 1) Demolishing a *perception of inability or failure* by creating an ethos of learning that can lead to student success. This means confronting lack of skill or lack of self-belief in the students’ own ability to perform the task successfully. Note that this condition presupposes there being a task, and the task being a challenging, or, in other words, a difficult one. So, for motivating students we need, first, an intellectual challenge, and second, adequate coaching and encouragement so that the students *believe* they have a reasonable chance of success; and 2) Giving some *degree of freedom* in how the students actually perform the task or learn the subject matter. Here the choice for the teacher is between real freedom in the choice of topics for assignments, readings and research tasks, and a semi-freedom in terms of teacher-mediated choices, such as lists of approved topics for assignments. This principle is based on students being adult learners who need choice and

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<sup>1</sup> Another discussion of the concept of motivation in this series is offered by Kvasz (2005).

freedom above and beyond direction and authority in order to be motivated. Still, the degree or type of freedom or choice given can be adjusted to match the level of student maturity and current levels of ability for the tasks they are performing.<sup>2</sup>

These two conditions are enough of a theoretical background for the issue, the real question being how to put these issues into practice in designing and delivering classes.

The writer's personal view is that motivation amounts to engaged learning and can be promoted by teaching in ways that encourage deep learning. In fact, promoting engaged learning might be a more meaningful concept for teachers, and therefore seen as something to be operationalized in practice and observed. Engaged learning is no more and no less than authentic and enduring learning, guided by principles such as generative content, active learning, reflective thinking, practice, collaboration, and community of practice (Shulman 2004b, 493).

### **Curriculum issues: first necessary steps**

The first stage for student motivation is in curriculum design and management. Students are likely to be motivated by clear rules, adequate challenge and information on what they are expected to do. They are more likely to be motivated in optional and specialized courses, but only if these courses carry adequate credit; that is, if they are recognized as the *main* part of their university education and held as equally important as the obligatory core courses. If, however, elective courses are treated as secondary or less prestigious in the degree program, student motivation is not likely to be high in these courses. On the contrary, they will be much more motivated in the obligatory courses.

This is not to say that an obligatory course is always less motivating. The teacher's choices in structuring and presenting the content and in designing the students' assignments can still allow for the principle of choice to be practiced. However, there is no internal, academic motivation to be developed in courses that are considered easy and in assessment that is testing only surface learning outcomes. The only motivated students in such courses are those who come there motivated in the subject and managed to remain motivated despite the course, rather than because of it. While, there is always a minority of such independently motivated students

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<sup>2</sup> The question of student self-confidence is established as critical in developing learning skills particularly in mass higher education systems, in non-elite institutions and in students who do not come from academic or middle-class backgrounds, a discussion taken up by Burns and Sinfield (2004).

present, the majority will be left unaffected, or remain motivated by the grades, or some other external punishment or reward.

In all courses, students are to some extent ‘strategically’ motivated by assessment. If assessment is continuous, demanding creativity in thinking and deep learning without completely overloading the student, then student motivation is likely to grow.

### **Motivating practice: induction, specialization and coaching**

The principle of choice applies to the curriculum and to every course: the key to success in motivating students is giving up the notion that all students have to learn the same material in the same quantity and in identical ways. This amounts to teaching less, which means teaching more in-depth, more difficult issues, more complex and ambiguous issues, but also more ‘authentically learnable’ amount of material (Shulman 2004b, 493). The specialization of students in the curriculum and in the course content should be allowed as soon as possible; that is, whenever they have acquired a necessary way of thinking, a language and conceptual common ground. This induction stage needs to amount to the initial stages of the course and cover only a minority of classroom hours. The majority of the time needs to be devoted to going in-depth, and it means allowing different students or groups of students to specialize in subsections of the material.

Instead of conceptual and content overload, more classroom time needs to be devoted to coaching students on the tasks in which they are to specialize so that they can develop into ‘engaged’ learners. For students to be successful and remain motivated they rely on the teachers’ ability to model the learning process through lectures, examples of good work, and examples taken from their own work as researchers. Coaching students on tasks they might initially consider impossible to perform may also involve additional training sessions in academic writing or research methods or analyzing the essays of students from previous years. Employing student peer review, or even students co-grading their written work with grading criteria in handouts, might also be a good idea.

Many teachers fail in motivating their students to perform a task by simply not providing adequate information on it, or, in other words, not setting the task properly. This is particularly visible in actual classroom situations with tasks involving complex outcomes from discussion or group work. It is as common, though less noticeable, in case of home assignments from reading or written work. In fact, each task given to students should be stated and explained as clearly as a task on an examination sheet would be. Students without adequate explanation or training are bound to fail in understanding what to do and will remain de-motivated, unsure of their skills or progress.

## **Motivating practice: communication, meta-cognition, reflection**

Another key requirement for motivating students is ‘going meta’: allowing the students to understand the processes by which they learn. Huber and Hutchings (2005, 111) quote a student saying: “I had a class where we studied how we learn...It flipped a switch and once it flipped, it can’t be turned off.”<sup>3</sup> The words come from a student taking part in a scholarly enquiry into teaching and student learning, where a moment of meta-cognition on the process of learning – the metaphorical “flipping the light switch on” – occurred. But the general process of ‘going meta’ and analyzing one’s own learning is perhaps the most advanced way of motivating students. In a way, all deep learning is achieved in a moment of insight when “the light gets switched on,” and learning skills are increased when that moment is registered, reflected or remembered, and influences other learning situations (in the same course) in positive ways.

In order to create the conditions for meta-reflection (leading to increase in motivation and in the learning skills), teaching should have a student needs analysis and student learning analysis component; both happening on an ongoing or regular basis. This amounts to explaining the structure of the topic, the teacher’s own approach and expectations and policies governing the learning process, briefing students on how they are supposed to learn (or what they are supposed to do) and allowing them time and space to reflect and report verbally on what they have done. For instance, this may necessitate student learning logs, short personal development plans, written personal reflections on reading, student portfolios including reflective pieces of writing, or simpler ongoing narrative feedback forms to be deployed to gather data on how students are learning and on what they are not learning. The method itself is secondary, as long as the reflection is carried out by both students and teachers and communicated to each other in some form so that it can be built upon in order to influence future teaching and future student learning.

## **Engaged learning in practice**

Two concrete examples of engaged learning will now be examined. One is a method called ‘community of learners’ (Shulman 2004b) and shares much in principle with inquiry-based or problem-based learning. The

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<sup>3</sup> I am repeating the quote after Huber and Hutchings, which comes from Erik Skogsberg, a student at Western Washington University’s course on student involvement in the scholarship of teaching.

course proceeds in three distinct stages.<sup>4</sup> In the first stage, students are made familiar with the basic concepts and issues through lectures and reading. The second stage consists of students being split into groups, and each group being assigned a research task which will turn them into ‘experts’ in one of the specialized sub-topics of the course. In the final stage of the course, students from different groups are split up and new groups are formed comprising an expert from each sub-topic. In this last stage the students engage in teaching each other about their specialized topic while working towards a concrete task together. They research problems and produce posters to be presented at an open exhibition, carry out an online research project, and put together a policy proposal that is formally submitted to the appropriate institution.

Although this method was implemented and researched in high school settings in the United States, lecturers in this region agreed that it is suitable for higher education settings here, particularly in subjects using several disciplinary approaches, models or distinct sub-fields. The innovation here is the complexity of the tasks in the second and third stages of the course and the notion of students educating each other, working as a team on a meaningful project, and becoming specialized very quickly within in the course. It is no surprise that this format has been shown to produce and sustain high levels of student involvement.

The second example of the practice of engaged learning comes from a teacher working in the post-communist region with an international group of Masters of Arts (MA) students, and it related to teaching political science/international relations.<sup>5</sup> It is an interesting case of research-based teaching. The teacher first narrowed the topic of the course significantly and allowed the students to negotiate an appropriate research question for the course and for the research paper to be created on the basis of the entire course.

In the first stage of the course, the students studied the main theories, debates and concepts through lectures and discussion. They next categorized the topics and debated their usefulness in relation to their research question. The teacher spent considerable time on modeling the

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<sup>4</sup> For research on this method see Lee Shulman (2004).

<sup>5</sup> The course was called ‘Political Identity and the Nation State’, and was designed and taught by George Welton as part of the MA Program ‘Transformation in the South Caucasus’ at the Centre for Social Sciences, Tbilisi State University. I suggested posting the student papers to a website in order to give students appropriate credit for their work. This will be incorporated in the course when it is run again next year. The academic paper that was produced by that course is still under preparation, and a paper on the method itself is also planned. The approach was first presented at the AFP discipline meeting in Sinaia, Romania in February 2006.

appropriate research approaches for students through discussing various work in the field, showing good case studies, and reviewing many research papers. The students were also sent to find empirical material and present it in an appropriate way. Once they were capable of researching a concrete extended case related to the research question, the students worked in small groups, looking for primary sources available from their own countries, and analyzing them according to the agreed methods. They brought their draft case-study papers together to workshop-like seminars, reviewed them and continued to research. The small research papers created by the different groups were graded and given feedback, and, following the end of the course, were to be placed on a website. The material was therefore to be viewed as a research paper for publication.

Because of its proximity to real academic work, this method was reported as motivation for the MA students, and could certainly be tried even to doctoral level courses, such as research-methods intensive courses combined with a specific topic in the discipline. In doctoral level courses, the results could be co-authored papers published by groups of students and the teacher. It is also an example of real “pedagogical intelligence,” where distinctly higher education pedagogy meets disciplinary approaches, thus creating a mix that is bound to raise the interest of any mature graduate students. This example is not meant for undergraduate teaching, but some of its elements can be adapted to senior undergraduate courses. Certainly, the general practice of problem-based learning involving students producing case studies is one that can result in student engagement in many social science areas. As an example, an interdisciplinary module consisting of sets of courses on regional studies employing multiple disciplines and relying on students producing concrete case studies on regional issues is currently being researched by lecturers in Partium University in Oradea, Romania (Flora and Szilagyi 2006).

## **Final thoughts**

It seems that in order to be motivated and to motivate others one needs to recognize the complexity of the work of teaching and take part in building up the knowledge base of the profession. Additionally, the process needs to address the existing situation in which successful university teachers rarely find this work satisfying in terms of being recognized and rewarded as their work is evaluated mostly by students’ (Matusz Protasiewicz 2005, 81). Motivating students is perhaps the most difficult and complex part of the professional practice of the teacher, and it is very difficult to pinpoint when it actually happens and why. That is why there

needs to be an end to the ‘solitude of the classroom’ (Shulman 2005) and opposition to intuitive and evidence-free views of teaching as a ‘seat of the pants’ operation. Within the teaching profession, there should begin a better network of knowledge sharing and recognizing of meaningful, scholarly approaches to teaching.

In documenting, publishing and peer reviewing the first-time teacher’s approaches and decisions, this paper is contributing to the creation of knowledge on motivating and building a discipline-based debate on teaching. This debate is the first step to a call for scholarship of teaching and learning in the discipline.

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**Cătălina Spârleanu**

## **Positive Feedback As a Means to Motivate Students or “I Go to Classes Because I Feel That I’m Important”**

*“Superb teachers can teach the ‘unteachable’”*

James Rhem

Informing, providing opportunities for study, passing on some of our knowledge – what are our responsibilities, as university teachers? Sir William Haley used to say: “The purpose of education was to ensure that by the time the students leave school everybody should know how much they do not know, and be gifted with a lifelong desire to know it.”

To motivate students means more than to simply encourage them to attend classes, to complete assessment tasks and to participate in discussions. Sometimes, teachers feel that motivating students is not one of their responsibilities, and it is my firm belief that this is a misconception. This essay emphasizes the fact that teachers hold a major responsibility in influencing how and why students learn, because their role is not only to master the knowledge they are teaching, but also, and more importantly, to master the ability to make that knowledge transferable. Although students also hold an important responsibility in participating in learning activities, the aim of this article is not to measure whose responsibility comes first, but to explore, in a unidirectional way, the teachers’ responsibility and one of the means to fulfill it. Finally, some of my supporting arguments and opinions were gathered from a short inventory made among the students I teach in Management in Social Work seminars (4<sup>th</sup> year of studies, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babes-Bolyai University). I was

particularly interested in the students' motivation to study in their university classes.

### **Emotional versus cognitive motivation**

Many theories have been advanced and many methods have been exemplified concerning emotional and cognitive motivation. Sheppard (2005, 13) stresses upon the importance of using interesting and personal assignments such as case studies and article debates in teaching, and as such giving students the opportunity of sharing their own experiences. Kvasz (2005, 25) elaborates on cognitive conflict and teaching as a way to help students overcome their cognitive resistance. Most of these methods show how to handle the situation in question as well as how to organize classes and specifically address the cognitive interests and abilities of the student.

By means of contrast, it is common knowledge that most human triggers are emotional ones. Mass media is full of emotional messages and people react emotionally to most stimuli. Therefore, it is only natural for students to have strong positive or negative feelings towards one class or another. "I prepare for seminars mostly because I like the person who's teaching, I feel he opens his heart to give knowledge to us... he addresses us personally... then, I study because I like the topics... and this way I end up taking part and being active in classes" stated one of the students. The feelings teachers generate towards their students as well as their self-reflective attitude towards their own courses are very important: far from being a means of manipulation, the practice of paying attention to students' feelings is crucial in knowing how to motivate them.

### **The emotional level in motivational theories**

Maslow (1943), in his Hierarchy of Needs, stresses upon the need of affiliation. According to this, some students may attend classes because they want to identify themselves with a group, to share information with the others and to build relationships. As one student remarked, "I come to courses because they are an opportunity for me to talk with the others and see what's new." Hence, the students' inner need for social status and self-esteem motivates them to attend class. In interacting with others, especially with the teachers, students are given the chance to feel valued and appreciated. A student stated: "What motivates me to learn for a class is the teacher – his attitude, the way he asks questions and he answers back ...when you like a teacher, you go to classes, you get involved, you smile

more and you even read and study more because you want to surprise him with your knowledge.”

Students are different and have unique personalities and, in order to obtain the best results, a teacher should address their special and individual needs as much as possible. One of the most revolutionary findings supporting this idea was the Pygmalion Effect (Rosenthal effect) which refers to situations in which some students perform better than others, simply because they are expected to do so (McKeachie 1974). Rosenthal showed that if teachers would expect an enhanced performance from some children, the children would show improvement. James Rhem, executive editor for the online National Teaching and Learning Forum (<http://www.ntlf.com/>), commented: “When teachers expect students to do well and show intellectual growth, they do; when teachers do not have such expectations, performance and growth are not so encouraged and may in fact be discouraged in a variety of ways.”

Therefore, a teacher’s attitude tends to have one of the most powerful influences on both the students’ motivation and results. “Given the complex interaction between reason and emotion in sustaining our efforts toward long-range goals, the task of motivating students is far from simple” (“Capturing and Directing” 1998). Consequently, emotional motivation can either sustain cognitive motivation or undermine it.

### **Positive feedback as an instrument for emotional motivation**

As a first time university teacher, I have struggled with setting the limits and maintaining an optimal balance between responding to students’ emotional and/or cognitive needs. Sometimes I have let myself get influenced by complaints regarding workloads that they considered too heavy and methods of assessment that, according to them, were too difficult. However, my reaction has changed upon learning how to motivate them and to show them that they are capable of accomplishing assigned tasks as well as enjoying them and taking advantage of them.

According to Barbara McCombs, (in “Capturing and Directing” 1998) “Research has shown that for students to be optimally motivated to learn, they must [...] believe that they possess the skills and competencies to successfully accomplish these learning goals.” The concept of feedback concerning the student-teacher relation refers to the practice of providing accurate data on students’ performance and/or how others may view them. Unfortunately, this method has been seriously altered and transformed into an instrument of criticism and blaming.

The main aim of feedback should be to describe a behavior or a situation and not to evaluate it. This is why grades are not a real feedback as even if the student gets a good mark, he still does not know what was correct. The situation is worsened when students receive bad grades without any form of explanation. In this situation, teachers should praise their students for some positive aspects of their work, such as the students' effort in writing the paper, his attendance to class, his handwriting, the general aspect of his paper, etc. Positive feedback should be given on a regular basis, regardless of the type of assessment used. For example, feedback can be written – when the student receives his paper and has the possibility to read it, or oral – when he accomplishes a task in the classroom. It is usually recommended to provide positive feedback in front of other students; however, for those students who do not feel comfortable being praised in public, it is best to provide feedback in an eye-to-eye conversation. Positive feedback is also a means to strengthen all positive things students do. Therefore, it should not only be used upon students' completion of assignments, but any time they accomplish some task or contribute to work in the classroom. This makes them feel valued and motivates them to get involved and participate further.

In the beginning, I found the constant delivery of positive feedback difficult to maintain and extremely frustrating, because I felt that the students were not motivated to improve. However, instead of becoming defensive and frustrated, some students showed willingness to work and try harder. I approached their mistakes in addressing the seminar's tasks as normal stages of learning, by pointing them out and analyzing them, and by sometimes even ignoring them in order to praise an important development or success the students had accomplished.

Most of the students told me they enjoyed attending classes where they felt valued and where the teacher showed them empathy and care. The teachers they appreciated most were those who communicated with them outside of classes, who encouraged them and smiled at them. Also, the students mentioned the importance they placed on the fairness of the evaluations and especially the presence of clear and detailed feedback, explanations and justification for the grading of their work. Finally, the students stressed upon their appreciation of teachers who treated them as individuals and addressed them by name, as opposed to referring to them as collective entities (e.g. as a “whole class”).

### **How to give positive feedback...**

It is my firm belief that the key of an effective and good teacher-student relationship is active listening. Maintaining eye contact, moving towards

students, nodding to them and verbal tracking represent ways to motivate them, by showing that you are involved, you hear, and more importantly, that you understand them. Students have reacted openly and with maturity when, in analyzing their work or behavior, I referred to concrete facts and avoided general remarks like “It is good,” or “That is evasive.” Replacing these comments with others such as: “Your paper contains relevant and original ideas” or “You didn’t elaborate the questions you have been asked” – was a demonstration of my interest in their paper and of the professionalism with which I treated their work

It is also important to pay attention to the strengths and limitations of each of the students. I have tried to reward students’ strengths and to strengthen their weaknesses as much as possible, even if it meant that I had to take extra time to analyze facts, attitudes and behaviors of students. Upon doing so, I was able to provide each student with opportunities for success and to show them that all are able to accomplish the tasks at hand. On another note, it is important to point out the negative side-effect inherent to the use of these methods which I unfortunately encountered. For example, students tend to become dependent on receiving positive feedback and evaluation and lose sight of the main aim of the tasks they are asked to accomplish. Another danger is the misdirection of students’ motivation: in this case, students would end up studying and learning for the teacher’s sake instead of for their own personal learning, growth and development. Also, the constant delivery of positive feedback can lead to disobedience and unjustified high self-esteem from certain students. In consequence to all these potential negative effects of positive feedback, one should keep in mind its overall goal: to help students develop into self-motivated learners. Shaping “personalities,” and not simply “professionals,” is one of the goals of education.

## **Conclusions**

The teachers’ responsibility lies not only in the providing of information and evaluation; it lies also in making students capable and willing to learn. Cognitive means of stimulating students are useful and important, but they are not enough because most human triggers are emotional ones. Students attend classes because they feel valued, because the teacher addresses them as individuals and appreciates the efforts they make. By using positive feedback, teachers reward and correct their students without demoralizing them, and encourage the students to learn, develop and get more involved in study activities.

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**Magdaléna Karchová**

## **Small Tests and Compulsory Compensation for the Non- participation in Lesson**

I started my teaching career at the university a year ago but I must admit I have always wished to become a good teacher. Probably it was because of my passion for learning and reading books as well as due to my rather theoretical orientation and skill to explain things simply and clearly to others. But I soon found out, how difficult it is to teach the students, moreover to be prepared for their questions, to be patient, when they react slowly or seem to be lazy and what is the most important, I think, to show them the beauty of a particular subject and its significance for their future.

### **How to motivate the students**

I work as a doctoral student and teaching assistant at the Faculty of Business Economics in Košice of the Economic University in Bratislava. I teach two subjects, in study branch Economics and Management of Enterprise. In particular, it is Financial Management, which is taught in the last year of graduate study and Business Finance, taught in the second year of the undergraduate programme. The scope of both subjects is theory and practical parts in the sense of pattern examples. Organization of lessons is the same in both cases. At the beginning we go through the theory related to the topic and afterwards we try to apply the theory in mathematical calculating and solving the examples.

During the first seminars it often happened that students came without being prepared and what was worse I could see and feel that my lessons were boring to them. They did not see the sense of counting and owing to that, they mechanically counted without much of thinking. They just followed the model example and I really cooperated only with a handful of students.

This provoked me to change the structure of the lesson. First, I tried to present to students all what I knew about the topic, show them connection with the other courses they have already passed and those they will attend later. As I attempted to do it as a dialog between myself and the students where everybody has to be involved I demanded the attention of every student. To be sure that all students understood my presentation, at the end of each topic I always ask some questions and wait for verbal response from the class. I see this as a useful feedback for myself to check whether I clearly explained the theory.

In December 2005, I took part in the training for first-time university teachers organized by the Slovak PhD. Students' Association. Here, I met wonderful people, who inspired me much in how to improve my performance, moreover my lessons, supervision of students, time management etc. Encouraged by the training I have launched some new elements to the lessons, namely small tests for student motivation and a compulsory compensation for non-participation in the class in the form of an essay where a student has to write his/her opinion on the particular topic of the lesson.

### **Small tests**

At my faculty, the assessment of similar courses to what I teach is usually based on gaining 40 points at the midterm tests (two 20 points tests) and another 60 points at the final exam. In order to increase student motivation, I decided to assign just 30 points to the midterm tests and to leave remaining 10 points for other activity. During the term, students get five assignments with two simple questions each where they can get 10 points altogether. The aim of the assignments is to motivate the students to focus not only on midterm test but also to prepare continuously, i.e. to have a look at the theory before each lesson in order to be able to apply it when solving the examples. Besides, this extra assignment has helped me to appreciate the individual activity of students.

Small tests contributed towards the students' activity during the midterm in my class. I personally felt that students were more able to communicate with me about the particular topic and our lessons seemed to be more professional and active. Although at the very beginning these tests were

perceived by students as something bad which gives them extra work, later they became an integral and accepted part of our seminars.

### **Compulsory compensation for non-participation in lesson**

During the term, every student can be at maximum three times absent from the lessons which is a rule at my faculty. In order to motivate the students to take part in all lessons I have decided to launch the compulsory compensation for non-participation. A student who is not present has to submit an essay of approximately 1500 words focused on the topic he/she has missed and to present the paper to the colleagues in the class. Students are asked and encouraged to write their understanding of the topic with strong emphasis on the practical application. I do not accept pure theory and I require adequate referencing.

I launched this compulsory compensation because it seemed to me that the majority of the students tried to use up all three absences simply because this was allowed. It has a negative impact on the class as we sometimes do not manage to finish the topic in the lesson and if the students do not take part in that lesson, they also do not understand what is going on at the beginning of the following class. Thus, it has been necessary to encourage the students at least to go through the notes from the last lesson. Because once it happened that a student came to the lesson without an essay, I decided to send an email with the topic and requirements for the essay to every missing student after a particular lesson. The second reason was that I wanted to show them practical application of the knowledge in real life instead of just the theory.

However, this activity also implies reading more economic newspapers by me and to be capable of answering professionally student questions. It has not been easy due to my rather theoretical orientation, as mentioned before. But the effect has been that we try to communicate more as professionals. In my opinion, the students of the economic major should understand macroeconomic terms as e. g. inflation, GDP, capital market etc. despite of the fact that the faculty is orientated more on entrepreneurship. I wish to provoke students to read articles in journals and newspapers in order they had a general view what is happening in Slovakia, in the EU area and all over the world in the economic and political sphere. As a student I missed similar activities because we did not read economic newspapers. They were hard to understand and it was not necessary for passing the course.

This compulsory compensation has triple action. Firstly, students have been motivated to study particular topic and consider problems connected

with that topic. Secondly, they have improved their writing skills by using professional style with referencing and finally they have practiced their presentation skills in front of the class. Also the students who do not present papers are involved. They can ask questions and exchange opinions on the subject. This has made our lesson more dynamic and interesting which has been appreciated also by the students. Unfortunately, due to large content of the course, I often had to stop the discussion and to limit each presentation to maximum of 5 minutes.

Compulsory compensation made a good contribution in students' motivation in my class. At the beginning of the term, the students did not like it that much but later they took it as a part of our educational process. While the small tests help students to achieve the credits by preparing continuously, compulsory compensation for non-participation in the lesson has a more practical effect as it helps the students to improve their writing and presentation skills.

## **Conclusion**

Two years ago while I was still a student, I did not like when our seminars were led by a doctoral student. I always wished that the lesson be led by a professor or an experienced lecturer. I had seriously thought that the young doctoral student can not teach us properly because of his/her poor practical experience and knowledge. But later I changed my opinion. Not only because every experienced professor started his/her career as a teaching assistant but also because I realized that a new generation of teachers at the university brings new spirit, ideas and innovative thoughts. I decided to join this group and face the insecure position when standing alone in front of the class. Besides, I am challenged to prove that I can be as competent as my older colleagues and what is more, that I can teach my students as a qualified teacher at professional level.

I believe that the educational process is both a professional and personal relationship. There are two parties involved in this relationship – the teachers and the students. Because of this fact it is necessary to join efforts from both sides. As a teacher I have to be initiative and progress in my profession, i.e. to make the lessons as interesting as possible, to focus on practical applications of the theory related to the topic and to teach the students for real life so they are able to prosper from the learnt theory. I shall initiate and later exploit the students' creative potential and new ideas for instance through the real case studies from the specific areas related to the particular topic.

But my endeavour needs the students' interest, hard work and time devoted to study. Students should show their enthusiasm, moreover they

should be open to new knowledge and both sides should try to do their best for another side understanding and support. Almost at every lesson I try to friendly remind the students of their duties: to be prepared for each lesson, to read economic literature, journals and newspapers and also to ask me for explanation if they do not understand something. This way I encourage students to be partners in our relation.

## **Useful Literature and Sources**

For all doctoral students who feel passion for teaching and their own professional growth is very important for them I recommend the website: <http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/good/deep.htm>. It provides a lot of advice and suggestions for teaching assistants, both for teaching and also for self study. This website includes interesting ideas of week's planning of seminars and contains helpful checklist for self and peer review of teaching, which is enclosed at the end of my essay. This checklist can be used either by a doctoral student or his lecturer. According to my own experience the checklist is more useful for a doctoral student. I applied it at the very beginning of my teaching career for managing the lesson and finishing it in time and later in order to involve students in active participation in lesson by asking addressed questions, etc.

The book written by Ivan Turek (2003) is very interesting, too. It was primarily published for students, but it provides practical recommendations for effective learning and time management, what can be useful also for doctoral students. The book is dedicated to educational styles and recommendations how to study depending on our specific skills and how to teach students according to student abilities.

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## Appendix: Checklist for self and peer review of teaching

<b>CHECKLIST FOR SELF AND PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING</b>		
<b>KEY ELEMENTS</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>Session planning</b> - clarity of outcomes-use of resources - timing of session		
<b>Development of session</b> - group management - Use of instructions/explanations - demonstration skills - problem solving - use of questions - rapport with students - individual support - use of resources		
<b>Student involvement in</b> - practical work - discussion - question/answer - individual dialogue		
<b>Student learning: evidence of new</b> - knowledge - skills - attitude - appropriate behaviour		
<b>Assessment of students</b> - appropriate learning outcomes - products - tasks - level of informed discussion		
<b>Action points to be addressed in advance of next session</b>		

Source: <http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/good/pr7.htm>

**Veronika Mit'ková**

## **Using Supplementary Materials for the Course**

I clearly remember the first time I taught a university course. Only four months earlier, I had graduated and thus left behind my students' desk; now, I was teaching a group of about twenty five bachelor degree students of economics in their first university seminar. This situation represented a first step in the lives of the students as well as in mine. The moment I entered the classroom, in spite of my trembling and enormous stress, I thought I may have an advantage over these students in thinking that most of them mustn't have had any idea what to expect from a teacher at the university level. What I learnt only later, the hard way, is that they knew exactly what to expect.

Though this is only my sixth semester teaching and I could thus still be considered a freshman, in this paper I will share the experiences I have lived since the beginning of my career in preparing the content of university seminars. I teach subjects such as Introduction to Economics, International Economics, Statistics, Econometrics and Microeconomics.

My initial problem is one that is well-known to first-time teachers: how to provide a useful and interesting seminar with motivating content for students while best using my time for research and other university duties? In other words, how to manage my time properly between preparing a seminar which maximizes the benefits to the students in a reasonable amount of time? I would like to share one way I discovered to deal with this challenge with other young university teachers.

## **Improper course structure: Learning from my mistakes**

As I am a first-time university teacher, I teach seminars which accompany lectures delivered by experienced professors. There was no recommended textbook for the course in which I first taught, so the professor and I collected a reader which consisted of self-prepared lectures and a few chapters from different textbooks. It took me more than two weeks to prepare my first one and a half hour seminar. During these two weeks of preparation, I had collected an abundance of materials related to the topic of the lecture: materials from outstanding professors, different types of tests and quizzes, and even crossword puzzles. A problem with the variety in my sources of information is the inconsistency of their terminology with the one used by the professor in his lecture, which led me to constantly adjust my sources to fit the required topic of the lecture.

Another problem arose from my usage of different kinds of materials for each seminar and in assigning different types of homework after every class. The combination of these problems made it more difficult for my students to follow in class and generally confused their understanding of the lecture topics. Upon considering the disproportionality between the time I spent preparing the seminars and their success, I knew I needed to find a more efficient way to teach.

## **The use of textbooks**

The following semester, we changed our system and decided to use a regular textbook for both the class lectures and seminars. In constantly being related to the textbook (Stiglitz 1993; Blanchard 1997), my seminars gained a stable structure and no longer provided inconsistencies in terminology. As such, the students knew what to expect from the seminars, which now only took me half the time to prepare as they had before. The majority of textbooks which can be used for these types of courses contain a list of further and complementary reading material recommended by the author. This list can be used to find various complementary materials such as papers, books, chapters or case studies which can help the students to better understand the subject in question. The use of these alternate sources of information is always very appreciated and favored by the students during the seminars because it allows them to hear concrete and practical examples of the topic discussed. The limited scope of the theory taught in the elementary courses taught render it difficult for me, as a teacher, to provide such appropriate and practical examples. However, I chose to discuss the end-of-chapter problems with the students and also to modify them and assign them as homework.

Almost every textbook written by American author has a European edition, so they are lacking in “real life” examples which our students can identify with. The best sources of these types of examples, which I use along with short case-studies in my seminars, are the television news and newspapers.

I made the right decision by using a textbook for my seminar because, in my opinion, for bachelor students in their first year of study, it is very important to have stability in methodology and terminology. This stable source can then be complemented by additional exercises and sources of literature. This situation may differ for a master degree seminar, where students know the principles of study and are able to discuss the topic in a wider dimension.

On another note, one could argue that my method of teaching is unchallenging to students and does not improve their ability to search for other sources of literature. In spite of this argument I consider using one recommended textbook for first-year students as a proper and efficient system of teaching. Because my course is offered in the first semester of students’ university career, this system of teaching seeks to ease the students’ difficult transition from high school to a completely new system of university teaching. This method allows me to teach in a way that is suitable for almost every student and also allows me to additionally challenge talented students by assigning them extra homework.

### **Using supplementary materials**

After three semesters teaching this same subject, we have continued to use a textbook, though we have changed it to a well-known book used worldwide. Aside from updated case studies, end-of-chapter exercises and problems and list of the further reading featured in this book, some publishing houses or corporations provide supplementary materials along with the textbook upon its purchase. Although only a few textbooks with these materials are available, usually they are the best or most abundantly used textbooks in a given field.

Following is a list of publishers which offer supplementary materials along with their textbooks, and with their webpages. Though I use books related to economics, these publishers also provide books and supplementary materials in the field of political science, mathematics, psychology and medicine, among others.

- Addison Wesley: [www.aw-bc.com](http://www.aw-bc.com)
- W. W. Norton and Company: [www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com)
- Wiley and Sons: [eu.wiley.com](http://eu.wiley.com)

These supplementary materials are usually provided free of charge, the only required condition is the registration of the teacher. After obtaining a password one can get on-line access to the supplementary materials appropriate for the textbook in question. The supplementary materials consist of: the instructor manual with solutions of the end-of-chapter problems, pre-prepared PowerPoint presentations or graphs (if needed), and a test bank, which contains the additional multiple choice questions, true-false questions, essay questions and numerical or graphic problems. There are several additional questions and problems which are similar to those in the textbook, and teachers can use them for assigning homework, for solving and discussing during the seminars, or for midterm and final examinations. Each of these has proven to be very useful and time saving in my work.

Through browsing the content of the publisher websites, I have discovered many useful source of supplementary materials for my seminars. For example, there exists a free test-generating program which only requires the installation of a computer program and the download of the “testbank library” for the textbook in question. Upon doing this, one is able to generate tests within a few minutes in any file format. Another way to use this program is in constructing an html practice exam. I use these tests interactively in my seminars and they are very much appreciated by my students because they provide a different means of evaluation.

The publishers also provide a support-system for the students. The students can find interactive tools for learning and testing of their knowledge, as well as useful tools such as file cards with keywords and even crossword puzzles. My students use this option to advance their studies and to prepare for their lectures and seminars.

## **Conclusion**

Because our faculty and curriculum are relatively young, only four years old, we are still looking for appropriate and effective ways to teach our students. As I have shown you, when some of our methods of teaching proved to be very time-consuming, we evaluated them as inefficient. In my experience in developing a system of teaching students through the cooperation of a young teacher and more experienced professor, I faced many obstacles. However, I feel that myself and the professor with who I worked were able to adapt our teaching methods and make important progress to optimize students’ learning. Finally, the positive feedback we received from the students at the end of the course confirmed our success, which was worth all the work we put into it!

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**Nora Mikušová**

## **Motivating Students in Quantitatively Oriented Classes**

Motivation of the students is very important but often not so easy. In this paper, I would like to share my experience in solving two problems concerning student motivation that I have struggled with in teaching. The first of these problems concerns the teaching of how to apply new software and second is with regards to the teaching of a group of students with different knowledge and skill levels.

I am currently teaching my fourth semester at the University of Economics in Bratislava. As a full-time PhD. Student, I teach seminars which follow lectures of quantitatively oriented classes. Until now, I have taught three different types of courses: Statistics, Quantitative management and Econometrics. All of these courses involve mathematics and in some of these courses, students need to use computers with special software. These courses are open for undergraduate students from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> year, as well as to some 1<sup>st</sup> year graduate students, and the seminars are attended students from different faculties and departments. As every faculty requires different levels of knowledge concerning mathematics and computer use, I always start my first lesson by asking students what is their faculty or department of study. My seminars are mostly attended by students from two of the universities' five faculties: the Faculty of business informatics and the Faculty of national economy, and their departments.

## Teaching the use of new software

The software used in my Econometrics class is new to most students. For this reason, students are usually quite excited and passionate at the beginning of the course, as they are learning many new things with this software; also, this software allows them to save a lot of time when calculating large sums. The students' enthusiasm often fades upon learning that their final exam must be done manually and not on computers, as too many students need to take the same exam (usually between 150 and 200), and the school's computers are limited in number. This limited number of computers is also a problem during the seminars, because I teach around 25 – 30 students on only 10-15 computers.

Under these circumstances, it is very difficult to motivate the students. In knowing that the software will not be used for their exams, the students prefer practicing manual methods which they will be evaluated.

Nevertheless, my task is to teach the students how to use the software. A source of motivation for learning how to use the software is provided by the fact that aside from passing an exam, the students must complete a project elaborated by applying the software. As a teacher, I wish to provide the students with positive motivation, and do so by explaining the benefits of the software to the students: among other things, it will save much of their time in praxis. However, in reality, not all companies have special software for econometrics or optimal programming and as such, the students are not always encouraged by this information.

In order to motivate the students, I present them further arguments in favor of the new software. It is important to stress that different types of software are mostly very similar, so by learning to work with one type, it is easier to understand how to work with other types. Furthermore, I often test the students: firstly, we conduct an exercise using only a calculator, after which we conduct the same exercise using a standard office program. Finally, we try the exercise with the new software in question, which is must faster than the two other methods. Because students wish to complete their work as fast as possible, this test increases their appreciation for the new software.

Also, students gain appreciation for the software through experience by practicing with its test version, a shareware version which normally works for one semester, at home. A 'tip' for easier learning that I give my students is to firstly calculate the assigned exercises "by hand," and to later verify their results in the software. This practice is especially beneficial because in most cases, examples in the exercise book do not provide partial results. Consequently, it is difficult for students to detect and track down a mistake they have made during their computing of long operations.

## Teaching students with different knowledge levels

My next experience is not oriented towards work with computers, but rather towards teaching students from different study programs and levels, and consequently with different levels of knowledge concerning the subject taught, all in one class. This semester, I teach a course entitled 'Quantitative management', which pertains to the essentials of management, mathematics and optimization; it is attended by 25-35 students between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> semester of study in different faculties. Also, it is some students' second time taking the course, as they have not succeeded in their exams of the previous year.

In this course, though seminars are not mandatory, it is difficult to pass solely by studying at home. As a result of this fact, I actively try to motivate the students to attend my seminars but do not wish to resort to my competence in making the seminars mandatory as I do not wish for the students' presence to be motivated by forced attendance.

To encourage these students of different levels and specialties of study to attend my seminars, I use different motivational techniques. My first step is to divide the class into two or three groups: the first is comprised of second year students, who normally do not have enough knowledge, experience and skills for this lesson as they do not have the necessary prerequisites for this course. In the second group, there are higher grade students from different faculties, who are better in mathematics and who have some experience with optimization. Finally, the third group is made of students who are taking the class for a second time.

One can easily imagine that these three groups have different reasons for attending the lessons. The first group is the most easily motivated. Their reason for attending class is quite straightforward: they wish to know how to deal with problems which they did not understand in the homework (for example, how to calculate a specific algorithm). The second group is more difficult to motivate, and their higher level of understanding render their questions more difficult and complex (for example, though they know why to use a specific algorithm, they wish to argue why it is not suitable). In this case, it is my responsibility to provide logical arguments and proper answers to their questions in order to motivate them to continue attending the lessons. The third group is the most difficult to motivate, as the students have previously taken this class and they are familiar with all the exercises being done. In this case, it is my duty to find new challenges and ways of teaching and to consult my colleagues who have taught this course in order to be aware of what was done in previous years. Once these students realize that I am using different examples and exercises as they have done in the previous year, they are motivated to attend class.

This was my experience with motivating students. Though I cannot say that my methods work all the time, I hope that their application will help students to better prepare and succeed in their exams and that practice and experience will allow them to improve their skills. Until now, I have not received feedback from my students about lessons, as they are not in fixed groups, which means that for every type of seminar in a given faculty and school year, different students are present. This renders it difficult to speak to students and follow-up with them after their exams. Next semester I will attempt to contact my students after their exams for some feedback information. Though I am not very optimistic in this regard because normally, students do not wish to communicate with their teachers once their class is completed, I hope to have luck and to be able to build upon students' feedback to improve my teaching methods.



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# Originality

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Elizabeth Sheppard

**Teaching Europe: The Use of Simulations to Motivate Students**

Anja Hennig and Tomáš Karásek

**Teaching Political Science As a Process of Collaborative Learning: the Motivational Value of Learning Groups within an International Setting**

Elizabeth Sheppard

## Teaching Europe: The Use of Simulations to Motivate Students

### **Introduction:**

#### **Making Europe more interesting and motivating to students**

Teaching Europe as many first time teachers have learned is not an easy feat. For European students and foreign students alike, the processes, institutions and policies of European integration are complex entities. First time and even seasoned teachers are faced with the task of explaining and re-explaining the co decision procedure, the three pillars of the Maastricht Treaty or any other myriad of issues that can be daunting, confusing and complex even for the most jaded insider. Given that the EU is often considered an ‘unidentified political object within political science» fitting neither into the traditional State category nor that of international organizations such as the UN, and has thus given rise to many specialized concepts and theories, many students in my experience can benefit from a ‘hands on’ approach. This, of course, can be educational visits to the European Institutions in Brussels or Strasbourg and talks with European lawmakers or bureaucrats. But, this is not always possible and can of course be quite costly. Yet, keeping students interested in something so complicated can be trying and original ideas are often in short supply.

Thus, other methods can be adapted to give the hands on feel, including the students in the European Union without even leaving the classroom and in a way which can even be considered fun (from what my students tell

me) and thus of course all the more attractive and motivating for the students.

In the program in which I teach, IES Paris, we have adopted a strategy of simulating European Council meetings and negotiations. The students are 3<sup>rd</sup> year (juniors) Bachelor degree students, mainly from political science and international business majors in American universities (though the students themselves are often international). In the past the simulation has been an extra credit for the European political science course for the best students to get involved in a more active way. It is currently the final project for my class on European political life and institutions and thus graded as a final exam at the end of every semester. Simulations are increasingly popular in political science teaching in the US and this form has been an increasingly popular way of teaching the EU in programs (see e.g. Boyer 1996; Berens 2005).

### **What does the simulation entail?**

There are two stages of the simulation: the ‘negotiations’ themselves that generally are held over an intensive two to three day period (Thursday afternoon to Saturday evening traditionally); the preparations that precede the actual negotiations. The first preparatory phase is quite important: students are assigned either individually or in groups of 2 a member state. Each member country of the European Union sends a delegation to the Council of the European Union summit. If the number of students is insufficient, as is currently the case, we adapt. For example, having currently only seven students, we decided to choose the 6 founding members of the EC and the UK. Students pick their countries out of a hat, as competition is rather fierce for France and the UK and this insures equity.

In reality, this delegation is comprised of the head of state/government, the foreign minister, and a team of high-level advisors. In the Model European Union simulation, the head of state/government and the foreign minister represent each country. These two individuals are the member countries’ delegations to the Model European Union.

Students are reminded that the job required of the delegation can be quite precarious. The delegation must be prepared to balance the views of their countries with the view of the European Union and delegations must also be able to keep their personal views out of the meetings. Delegates, as with all participants, must stay in character at all times. As part of the delegation position, delegates must write a policy statement/position paper, collect information before and during the Model EU about their countries,

propose resolutions during the simulation, and must have a voice in the on-going debates throughout the Model European Union. To successfully navigate through the Model EU, a strategic mix of attentive listening, voicing opinion, brainstorming, coalition building, and drafting resolutions must be employed.

During the preparatory stages, delegations must write a policy paper stating their countries' views and addressing the agenda that has been set for that Council meeting.<sup>1</sup> The agenda is set by the President of the Council (whichever student is representing the country which is the incoming President of the EU) with the help of faculty and is generally based on the real agenda to come in the forthcoming Council meeting. For example, in our last simulation in December, our students found themselves negotiating the EU budget and British rebate while the real leaders were preparing to do the same and as news that the UK would be willing to put the rebate on the table came out, our students adapted their positions. In the preparatory phase, other countries can attempt to put onto the agenda other issues through the website that is created as an interface between the different students (and different schools) that participate. In order to prepare these papers, students are encouraged to refer to the websites of European institutions as well as those of the governments of the member states. As many are in English or French this is not a problem. The professor also puts other documents, brochures and books at their disposition in the library and they are encouraged to utilize the online newspaper and magazine subscriptions that the library has to round out their research.

The policy papers and the agenda are then put on a website, allowing the students to prepare for negotiations, positioning themselves with regards to their own countries position, but also those of the other Member States. This enables them to learn not only about « their » country but about the relationships between the Member States and the different coalitions that can or can not be formed around certain issues. I generally use this as a tool within the classroom throughout the semester, allowing them to discuss in class the positions of their countries on different policies (i.e. Agriculture, the Euro) and motivating them to find out more about countries and cultures that are often foreign to them and forcing them to attempt to understand and question these positions. Thus, students are equally prepared to form counter proposals and to meet with other delegations in smaller meetings during the simulation. Each delegation prepares a strategy to optimize successes and minimize the obligation of accepting resolutions that are unfavourable to their interests. To do so, each member of the

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<sup>1</sup> Currently, as a final project, we have adapted the agenda. It is the professor who sets it and it is more limited in scope as we have 3 hours rather than a few days.

delegation familiarizes themselves with what issues are considered ‘critical issues’ and which issues have some room to use in bargaining with other delegations.

At the European Council Meeting itself, we split into two groups one Council formation dealing with internal issues such as budget, agriculture etc. and one external affairs council dealing with enlargement, the Common Foreign and Security Policy etc. This allows a larger number of students to take part in debates. We also assign students posts of Commission representatives and Secretariat. And, finally, we also in the past have constituted a press corps that interviews the heads of government and each day either creates a Daily Journal or a daily news flash (audiovisual equipment permitting). Teachers oversee the daily roundtables, providing information when necessary.

For professors, preparation varies depending on the number of students. The preparation can be very demanding for the interschool simulations and it required a full time staff to coordinate as it involved 150 people. Currently it involves on the professors part around 4 hours outside of class (perhaps more) to set the agenda, organize and explain the rules of the game and to help and prepare the students for writing policy papers and researching the issues.

### **Conclusion: The advantages of this strategy**

This brief description of the simulation does not quite do it justice. The number of times I have overseen the preparations and accompanied my students in the negotiations has been enriching both for the students, according to their own testimonies, and for the professors. For the students, it gives them an opportunity to grasp the issues at hand outside of the typical textbooks, and moreover to understand the very real difficulties associated with deciding big issues with 25 member states sitting around a table, each with their own agenda. It also enables students to go and research policy positions that they would not otherwise do, motivating them and getting them personally involved. Many, from personal experience, get so involved that even after negotiations end the first night, they spend the evening ‘negotiating’ with their fellow heads of state-investing themselves in their positions as defenders of their country. On another level, beyond learning about Europe, it gives the students a chance to learn finer points in public speaking and get a first hand experience in negotiations. They get practice in dealing with the high pressures of government activities and it is also a great example of what would be expected of you in a real governmental position.

As for the problems encountered, apart from logistics when the simulation included 150 people (that can be a mess), preparation can be a problem if the students are not properly guided. Having taken over from a former professor who was less involved in the process, unprepared students is the worst case scenario for this sort of activity. Another rare though unfortunate problem is balancing introverted students who refuse to talk and unusually extroverted students who monopolize speaking time and can also on occasion insult their colleagues. This scenario has only happened once in the few years I have been teaching though. It is very important to guide the students throughout the simulation, not only by giving them the tools to inform themselves but also guiding them through the ABCs of negotiations and public speaking. When possible, it works well to have time outside the class room to practice and to go over their policy papers before they have to turn the final drafts in. Also on another note, one of the best extra activities involved taping the students, 'interviews' by the press corps (other students) which were then shown at the final session. This allowed students to see themselves and also during the simulation kept them in character. It was also a great memory to take away as everyone got a CD of it. Finally, and I think most importantly, there has always been a guest speaker, a real European bureaucrat or politician who has spoken of the real activities and who often has stayed around to coach them or give the students pointers.

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**Anja Hennig and Tomáš Karásek**

# **Teaching Political Science As a Process of Collaborative Learning: The Motivational Value of Working Groups within an International Setting**

## **Introduction:**

### **Evolution of Communication technologies and teaching strategies**

Within the last two decades, we have witnessed a shift in theoretical approaches of learning processes, from tutor-centered towards learner-centered approachess. In this new teaching and learning environment, “teachers do better to ask good questions rather than to answer questions in a definitive manner” (Friesendorf 2004, 3). This shift coincided with a rapid development in communication and computing technologies, which together resulted in a major reassessment of teaching and learning strategies.

In our paper, we hypothesize that that *group work helps motivate students*. As our experience stems from an international online-based seminar combined with face-to-face workshops, we also present two additional findings related to these aspects of group work. Firstly, as the very existence of our seminar proves, the *online basis makes the group work in an international setting possible* by overcoming physical as well as mental distances. Secondly, we are convinced that *group work helps make the best out of an international setting* by fostering close and intensive contacts between students and tutors from different countries.

Our argument proceeds from a general evaluation of means and ends of group work, followed by an assessment of suitability of this teaching strategy as demonstrated on a specific issue of academic cultures. We then continue with an analysis of our empirical experience in the *ForPol Online* seminar ([http://tu-dresden.de/die\\_tu\\_dresden/fakultaeten/philosophische\\_fakultaet/ifpw/intpol/Projekte/](http://tu-dresden.de/die_tu_dresden/fakultaeten/philosophische_fakultaet/ifpw/intpol/Projekte/)), and conclude with an outline of the advantages and challenges which will likely be faced by those willing to utilize group work in their teaching.

## Why group work? Means and ends of collaborative learning

We can roughly distinguish between passive and active approaches to learning. While passive approaches assume that students learn by receiving and assimilating knowledge independently from others, active or constructivist approaches present learning as a social process (Björck 2004, 25). In this sense, the learner constructs knowledge by formulating ideas into words. These ideas are constructed not only through individual reasoning but in particular through communicative reactions of others. That kind of peer-to-peer interaction, structured within working groups, is known as collaborative learning.<sup>1</sup> This learning approach implies a model of interactive teaching, which differs fundamentally from the traditional one-way knowledge transmission (Harasim 1990).

Collaborative learning has become an important trend in higher education, mirrored especially in the widespread use of computer-based learning systems (see Koschmann 1996). However, learning within groups is not only a response to the rise of internet-based “network society” (Castells 1996), but is primarily convincing through its pedagogical effects. As studies show, collaborative learning “tends to increase motivation and satisfaction within the learning process in general” (Björck 2004, 26).

Hereby, we can distinguish between *cognitive*, *psychological-emotional*, and *management-related* effects on students. The *cognitive* effects result from processes of self-explanation, where different knowledgeable members benefit from each other. Collaborative learning also combines various styles of learners, confronting the group members with different perspectives on the same subject (Bremer 2000).<sup>2</sup> *Psychological and emotional* effects are expected to create a favourable climate to learning. Though working with peers reduces uncertainty and helps participants find

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<sup>1</sup> Carell and Herrmann (2005, 75) distinguishes between collaborative and cooperative learning. Unlike the latter, the former implies a deeper interrelated and coordinated learning, where communication and discursive reasoning is a core measure for reaching the end of group work.

<sup>2</sup> For different styles of learning, see Kolb 1985.

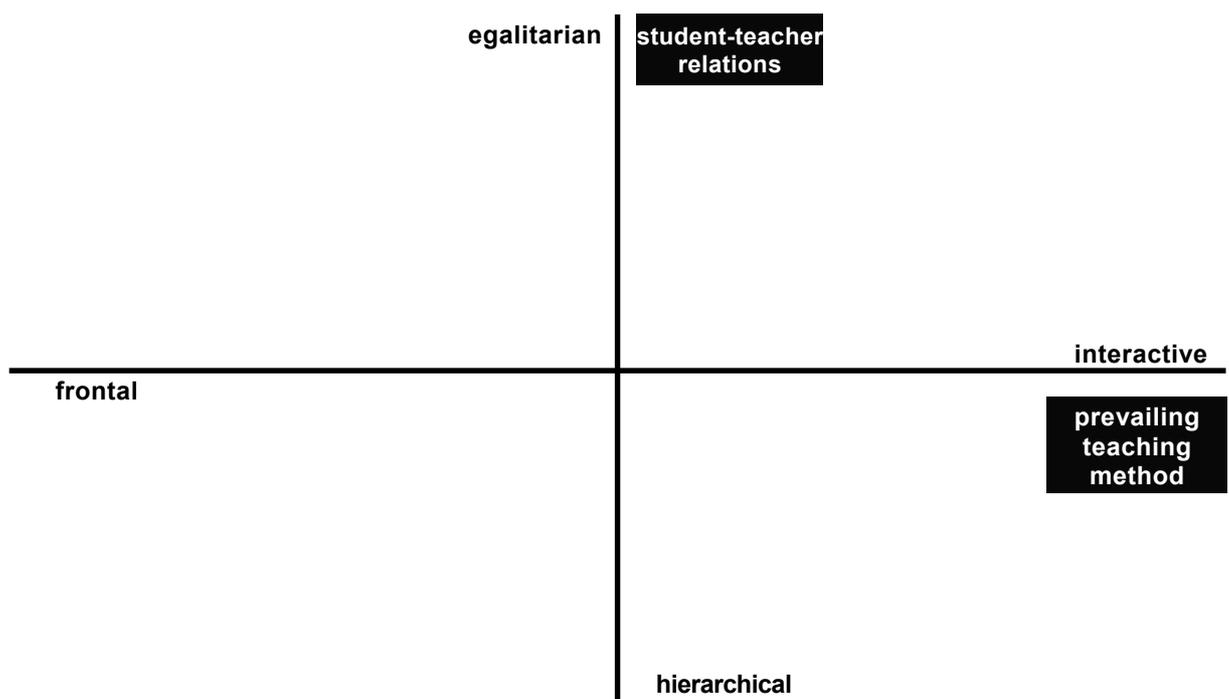
their way through complex tasks (Harasim 1990), it is also a challenge to one's self-image, forcing one reflect upon his or her view and role within the group. What we call *management-related* effects are social skills which are fundamental for the increasingly team-based professional environment. Within groups, students need to organise their work efficiently and independently from their teacher. They have to fulfil given tasks within a clearly set deadline which trains them to reduce the complexity of facts and to share responsibilities within the group.

The described model of learning also challenges the role of the teacher. As Carell and Herrmann (2005, 78) state: "Teachers become in that process a facilitator, a coach who carefully prepares and accompanies the process of collaborative learning and who gives feed back," where necessary. For those who favour the traditional "frontal" approach of teaching, that might be an uncomfortable image. Therefore, let us take a look at what we call "academic cultures," asking under which conditions it makes sense to implement such a tool.

### Paramteres of Academic Culture

The self-understanding of a university teacher is shaped first of all by his or her individual personality and interests, but also by the academic

*Figure 1: Parameters of academic culture*



environment - what we call “academic culture.” As mentioned above, various approaches to learning imply different models of teaching. Despite inter alia the Bologna process, distinct academic cultures resulting from pedagogical traditions but also experiences with political changes at European universities persist and create different environments for teaching. While ignoring structural and financial conditions, in Figure 1 we would like to highlight two parameters which we regard as helpful for defining academic cultures and thus for demarcating the space available for the implementation of group work.

Obviously, the chances for a teacher representing an academic culture with a high degree of frontal teaching and hierarchy of successfully implementing collaborative learning are limited. However, compromises are possible, as our project illustrates.

### ***Forpol Online: Group work withing an online international setting***

The result of an initiative by young researchers from the IR department of the Dresden University, the seminar *ForPol Online - Foreign Policies in Changing Europe: Poland, Czech Republic and Germany Compared* connected Political Science institutes in Dresden, Prague and Wrocław. This was possible because of a special grant from the Saxonian government for projects, which aimed at developing and realizing internet based courses at the university level. The idea to establish cross-border cooperation between two neighbouring countries within that framework was due to the scientific and personal curiosity of the team at Dresden University. Very quickly, a stable group of five young researchers from the mentioned institutes was created. During the course of nine month, we met three times for intensive preparatory work in Dresden and Prague. Thanks to our didactical openness and content-related creativity, we managed to jointly develop a seminar which turned out to be a very enriching experiment not only for the students but for us tutors alike. Before sketching out the didactical concept of *ForPol online*, let us briefly introduce you to some of its organisational aspects. In order to hold the size of the group concise, we decided to choose only ten students (mostly working towards their master degree) from each institute. They had to apply for the seminar by writing a motivation essay and passing an interview in English, as it was the language of our oral and written communications. Furthermore, such a course is more time-intensive than regular ones, so we had to be sure to invite highly motivated students.

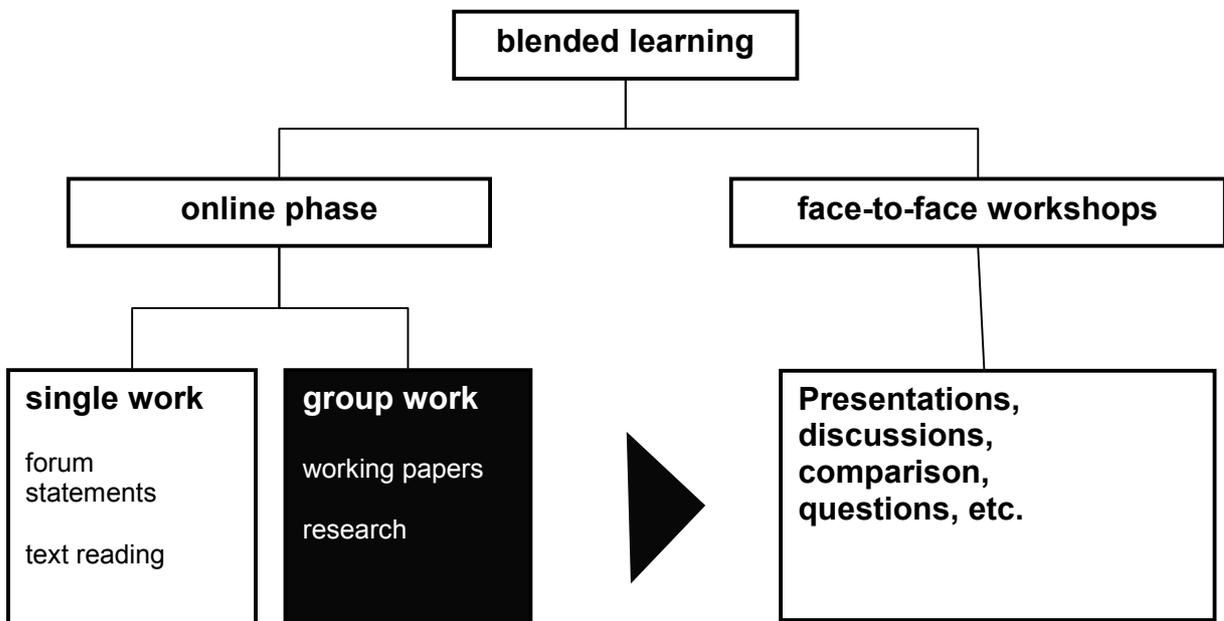
At the end of the semester, all participants had to evaluate the seminar online and face-to-face. Thus, the reflections presented in this paper are based on our evaluation as well as on of the results of the students’

evaluation. We relied on a very detailed evaluation because the seminar is meant to be offered three times. In order to optimize the seminar for the next round (October 2006 - January 2007) we used the students' remarks - which turned out as very helpful - to correct the content and structure of *ForPol online*. As the results of evaluation were generally very positive, the overall concept of the course was maintained in the form outlined below.

Based on the blended-learning method and using a freeware Learning Management System (LMS), we created tri-national groups out of 30 students. Their task was to analyse different cases of the three states' foreign policies during the 1990s: the debate over the EU Constitutional Treaty, relations towards Russia, and the Iraq conflict. Online work during four-week modules was supplemented with four face-to-face weekend workshops. English was the working language of the project.

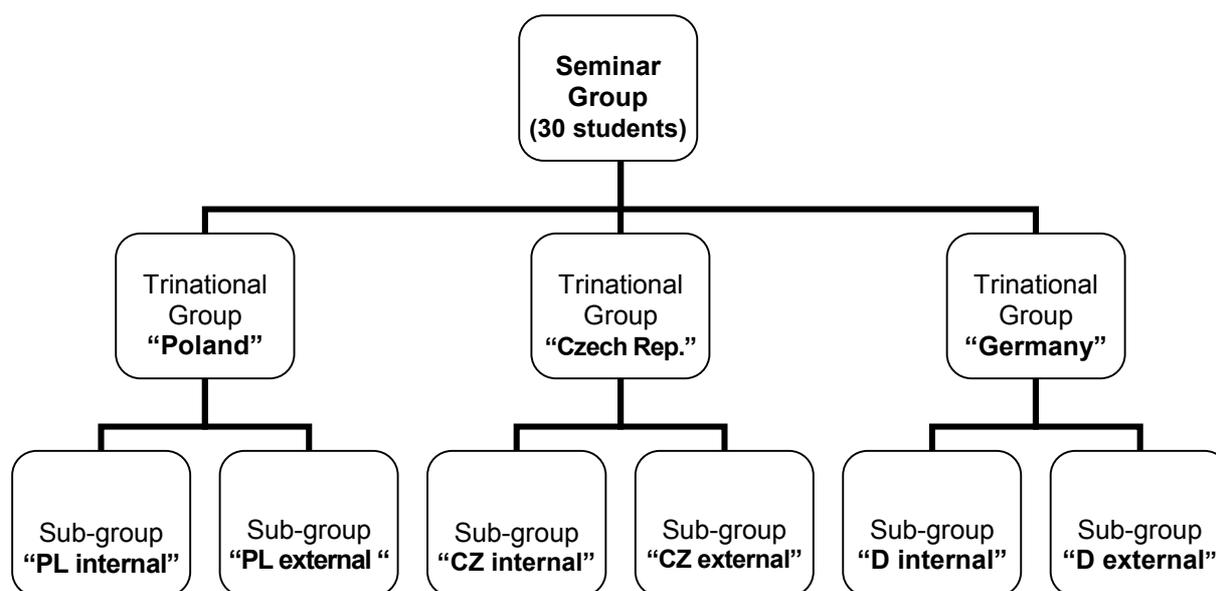
Students worked within the groups in two 'environments', online and face-to-face. Besides the initial steps (reading a text and giving a statement on it in an online forum), students were expected to work as a team (Figure 2).

*Figure 2: Group work as a central component of ForPol Online blended-learning concept*



The working groups were divided according to the country they focused on and the factors influencing the foreign policy – either internal or external (Figure 3). We devised these two sets of factors as the most simplified yet still effective tool of foreign policy analysis within our group setting.

Figure 3: Division of working groups in ForPol Online



Students had to organize their work using the communication tools of the LMS. The division of tasks and roles within the group (searching for additional literature, looking up and summarizing sources in national languages, writing of the final paper, etc.) was left up to them. As tutors, we could oversee the work of the students by reading their intermediate results and by following the debates taking place in the online forums. The final group papers were subsequently presented and debated at the face-to-face workshops, first within the country groups between the external- and internal-factors working groups, and also within two formations of the three internal and external working groups.

## Challenges of managing working groups

### ***Formulating tasks and guaranteeing knowledge exchange***

Because of the online-dimension of this project, we decided to provide the students with a *web-based storyboard* where tasks, steps and deadlines were precisely formulated each week. This strict formal setting was combined with open research questions, such as which internal factors have influenced the analyzed foreign policy most, according to the group's point of view. As a result, students were strongly motivated to do further research in order to come to a conclusion. It is obviously impossible to anticipate the results of such "collective reasoning" in detail; rather, we expected the students to argue their findings in a scientifically convincing way. In this vein, our role as tutors during the online phases was to provide the students with

motivational feedback (“pluses first, minuses second”), making them aware of analytical problems in their intermediate research results.

The final online papers remained uncommented and were meant to be read by all participants before the face-to-face meeting. Thus, at the workshops, we needed to moderate students’ discussion of their results, ideally in a knowledge-enhancing way. However, we also had to point out problems and mistakes. Here lies the question of different “academic cultures”: When your role as a teacher does not rely on transferring factual knowledge, are you open to regard the students also as research partners? Will you maintain your unique position as a teacher while offering a fairly liberal approach to learning? And, provided the answer is ‘yes’ in both cases, how do you assess and mark the results of the group work?

### ***Providing assessment through group discussion***

Nothing releases the tutor from his or her responsibility to assess the students and mark their effort. We conclude, however, that the traditional focus on the results of students’ work is not sufficient for evaluating group work. Rather than inquiring primarily on whether students “got the results right,” a teacher should first of all assess students’ analytical ability, asking whether they “addressed the problem correctly.”

Moreover, when managing working groups, what matters is not only *what* you assess but also *how* you assess it. In order to use the full potential of the working-groups setting, we suggest that instead of “lecturing” the students on their final papers, it makes more sense to use a form of guided discussion in which students comment on the results of their colleagues. This provides an opportunity for all students to engage in the process of identifying and correcting mistakes, but also to raise arguments in their defence. The challenge for the tutor is twofold. On the one hand, tutors must structure and moderate the discussion in such a way that it results in concrete conclusions; otherwise, it might lead to confusion rather than the desired clarification. On the other hand, he or she must stay in a position to assess, a position which, as we discovered, could be challenged by a striking feature: the formation and manifestation of a strong group identity.

### ***Dealing with “group identities”***

Despite meeting their colleagues exclusively online for most of the time, the students in tri-national working groups managed to develop a tangible team spirit. This, indeed, can be regarded as one of the primary motivational advantages of group work in general: At the emotional level of the learning process, it helps to transgress the purely academic world

and to create a situation close to what the students will most likely experience in their professional career.

While very helpful in motivating the students, the formation of a group identity also caused some problems during the assessment process. In our experience, a well-known Foreign Policy Analysis finding stating that the more time and effort one spends on a problem, the more he or she is convinced of the clarity and correctness of the results, was proved correct. As such, our students sometimes refused to accept and internalize our critical remarks on their work; the fact that their findings had resulted from an intensive process of collective consultation and peer review raised their resistance to external criticism.

### **Conclusion: The motivational effects of Collaborative learning**

As our experience with *ForPol Online* shows, the collaborative learning approach motivates students by promoting individual initiative combined with openness to and respect for the work of others. When supported with the use of IT, this approach seems to be an ideal tool for teaching in an international setting as it allows for the maximisation of the advantages provided by the international nature of the project. It is important to note, however, that this approach is just as helpful in supporting locally-bound classroom group work (Bremer 2000).

Whether the concept of collaborative learning succeeds in each particular case depends significantly on a set of parameters we describe as the “academic culture.” A tutor interested in using the concept of collaborative learning in his particular classroom setting should ask himself the following questions: How are the tasks formulated? How do groups’ results get discussed and developed? How do I assess the students? Other important questions are of a self-reflective nature: Am I prepared for possible resistance and criticism from the working groups? Tackling these challenges is the first step towards mastering the efficient and fruitful means of teaching embodied by group work.

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# Supervision

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Joanna Renc-Roe and Paul Roe

**The Skills of an Academic Supervisor: Good Practice and Personal Examples – Experienced Teachers' View**

Kinga Kas

**Supervision: A True Challenge for First-time Teachers**

Patrycja Matusz Protasiewicz

**How to Supervise Students in Writing Essays and Avoiding Plagiarism**

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# **The Skills of an Academic Supervisor: Good Practice and Personal Examples**

**- Experienced teachers' view**

## **Introduction**

Research projects, theses or dissertations are the final element in higher education on all levels. They develop high level research skills in the discipline, and involve the student in a discovery approach to learning in ways previously not experienced in the classroom. However, the art and craft of a good academic supervisor is rarely explicitly discussed as personal professional experience is acknowledged to be the most important source of knowledge and skills. For the supervisor, it is often a case of learning by doing.

Yet, unless discussed in a reflective manner this type of knowledge often remains tacit and inaccessible, particularly to novice supervisors. Luckily, supervision (particularly as part of graduate education) has recently lost its status as an unknown art of academic work and has been researched and discussed widely in writing, by supervisors and researchers of education (e.g. Johnson et al. 2004; Wisker et al. 2003; Grant 2003; Douglas 2003).

Still, each teacher could pose many questions about the practice. Is supervision a form of teaching or rather a form of research consulting? What skills are students required to have? What skills are to be developed for successful supervisory practice? What are the key stumbling blocks in the supervision process, and what might help to deal with them? How

much is a matter of good practice and how much personal style is involved in supervision?

The first part of this paper considers a possible conceptualisation of skills that might lead to good practice. This is based on some selected research into this 'theory of practice' coming from educational writing. The second part of this paper is written from the point of view of personal experience in an ongoing practice of supervising students at CEU, in the department of International Relations. This is a documentation of personal style and personal problems routinely encountered.

### **Supervision as teaching or research?**

Educational systems, fields and disciplines, institutions and departments, vary in how they understand the process, and much of the process is often left underdeveloped pedagogically and is simply inferred from university research regulations. This presents a problem for understanding supervision as related to teaching as a pedagogical practice, or, in Light and Cox's (2001) words, a 'genre of teaching'.

Some disciplines see supervision as part of the research work of faculty, not reported as part of their teaching duties. This is especially the case in hard sciences: research is more likely to be conducted in teams, comprising of supervisors and supervisees. Perhaps here we are dealing with a case of teaching-informed research. In the social sciences, the input of the professor is less hands-on and more freedom is given to the supervisee in research design. For the supervisor, this might also necessitate a model of research-based teaching as some form of teaching needs to occur in order to make the individual student work possible.<sup>1</sup>

If we agree that we are dealing with a pedagogical research-based practice, we can start to discuss the skills required in successful supervisors. In this paper, some of the empirical finding on the supervisory practice offered by the qualitative, grounded theory research of Douglas (2003) were used, as well as some more general advice texts for university teachers (Wisker 2005; Delamont and Atkinson 2004).

It seems that supervision is an intellectual journey for the student and teacher, an intensive form of teaching and an even more intensive form of learning, where different stages require different input from both sides. The goal is disciplinary socialisation on all levels of university provision, and on the highest, doctoral level it is the socialisation of research students into 'stewards of the discipline' (Golde and Walker 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> For more analysis of differing disciplinary approaches to teaching and research see Trowler and Becher 2001.

Needless to say, the journey is shown as a difficult one and full of traps for supervisors and supervisees alike. The easiest option is to assume that the student must have a certain level of skills and preparation already at the beginning of the journey: these might include a level of proficiency in research design and methods, oral and written academic argumentation, and referencing and bibliographical research. General personal skills assumed indispensable for research work may also be expected, such as good study skills and working habits, independence and self-discipline, self-motivation, confidence and openness to criticism, and project and time management. If students were to have these skills right from the start, the task of supervision would undoubtedly be easier. The problem is that these skills can only be adequately developed during the actual research experience, thus necessitating a degree of the support in their development from a more experienced mentor.

For the purpose of a brief discussion, we propose that the general skills needed for successful supervision come under four categories of: ‘modeling skills’, ‘interpersonal communication skills’, ‘intellectualizing skills’, ‘trouble shooting skills’. Some of these are more academic and others more social, and all require an ongoing creative conceptualization of the relationship between teaching and research.

### **Modeling**

Perhaps the biggest input of the teacher can be seen in their ability to model the research process and product for the novice researcher. This means translating the journey into meaningful stages and manageable tasks that need to be fulfilled in appropriate time frame. After all, it is only the supervisor as accomplished researcher who really *knows* what the process and the product should look like; what different possible research designs really mean in practice. The student will only find out all this by going through the process. Some of the modeling work is done in the classroom in formal ways during research methods training, while most occurs in individual consultations. Simply discussing one’s own or colleagues’ particular research projects and analyzing their design and implementation is the most obvious and interesting form of modeling.

On a more conceptual pedagogical level, this could mean designing the overall research part of the degree program in a way that is optimal for the needs of the discipline and the students. One good idea is to conceptualize different research stages and offer students a chance to develop some written material on these different aspects already during (or instead of) regular coursework. For example, students working towards a defensible and manageable research proposal can engage in separate pieces of writing

on reviewing theoretical models for their likely research, reviewing available methodologies, and applying their chosen methods in a pilot study followed by a report. All of this could start by writing a personal development plan in order to sketch out and analyze what is it that they want to achieve and what they need to learn in order to achieve it. Such pedagogically meaningful research assignments, supported by tutorials with likely supervisors, can make for a much more meaningful progress of the student than overloading them with content unrelated to their actual research interest.

### ***Interpersonal communication***

The second set of supervisory skills departs significantly from the core academic and pedagogical work of ‘modeling’ research. The psychological area of interpersonal communication is a social skill, which some supervisors naturally have and others need to learn by reflection, self-analysis or through training. All encounters between tutors and students require effective communication skills: the skill of active listening, the ability to offer constructive and balanced advice or criticism, and the ability to identify and deal with communication breakdowns and diffuse tension or negative feelings. This form of help is often called ‘pastoral work’ and is reportedly done in disproportionately high amounts by female lecturers, and not enough by male lecturers.<sup>2</sup>

Active listening requires giving time and space to students to talk about their problems, and an ability to wait for the real problems to emerge. Often this is not the first problem the student enters one’s office with. Sometimes when seeking help or advice, students need time to actually formulate to them what it is exactly that they need help in.

The key issue is to have clear and agreed rules for the supervision process, negotiated by students and teachers together. This ‘supervision contract’, whether written or not, needs to be clear and known to both sides (Philips and Pugh 1992, 116). It might also be a good idea to keep written records of supervision such as supervisory logs, and to agree on agendas of what is to be discussed at each meeting or consultation. (Whisker 2005; Lewis and Habeshaw, 1997, 63) When other problems emerge, including personal problem going much beyond the research process, perhaps the simplest advice is to be aware of where to refer the students for further help or advice.

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<sup>2</sup> For this and other gendered aspects of supervision see Leonard 2001.

## ***Intellectualizing***

According to Douglas (2004), intellectualizing is another core area of supervisory work. Essentially, it involves a whole set of skills of analyzing, rephrasing, critiquing, peer reviewing and co-constructing the place of the student's work in the discipline. The skill often requires much disciplinary input from the supervisor in the early stages of the project, and gradual withdrawal, or 'intellectual weaning' of the student in the later stages (Phillips and Pugh 1992, 114). By the end of the research project, the supervisor is simply a peer reviewer of the student's work. The amount of initial input is a tricky question and needs to be discussed in depth with the students, as certain degree of student independence needs to be present at the beginning of the process as well. Thus, in the social sciences the teacher often helps the student identify and evaluate approaches, key debates or methods, or the relationship between them, without ever offering the student actual preliminary or final research questions.

Note that the change of status for supervisor or peer, the process of intellectual weaning or any form of intellectualizing can occur only in relation to students' work in progress, which involves ongoing writing. The process and products of writing, even if preliminary, are necessary to the formation on student's research thinking and will also constitute the development of their identity of a researcher. This means enforcing deadlines is paramount.

Similarly, there is nothing more important in this process than timely and written feedback with constructive and helpful criticism and suggestions received from the supervisor on any draft submitted. Although the common practice in many institutions is to give feedback to students orally, written feedback is vital, it can be discussed orally but also kept by the student for future reference, it is often more exact and detailed, if the professors has taken the time to summarize the usual scribbled notes on the margin of the student's draft, and it approximates the actual process of peer review of academic work.

## ***Troubleshooting***

The final skill area is 'troubleshooting'. This is perhaps a more practical area, but one which demands creativity, reflexivity and higher level of 'pedagogical intelligence' as well as emotional intelligence on part of the supervisor.

Because research is a journey and a process, and because it combines numerous personal and intellectual skills, it is plagued by stumbling blocks and troubles. These can include writer's block, or an inability to start

writing, overload of reading and theory, multiple crises of confidence in one's level of preparation or ability, stress associated with public presentations and defenses, tensions between time put into research versus publication (or conference presentations), and stress caused by career choices and further research options. The supervisor can help the student negotiate such difficulties by offering personal examples, tried and trusted methods to overcome major blockages, or by helping students find out help from others. Organizing study or research groups and contacting other specialists might also prevent and ease the problems. A certain degree of explicit management of the process and help with what comes after is also part of the task. This involves suggesting best venues for publication and networking, choosing external examiners, and coaching students for successful defense and public presentation of research.

According to one lecturer, the supervisors' role is one of 'negotiator': between the student and the discipline, the student and the department, the supervisory teams and external examiners, and the student and funding bodies or disciplinary association.

Individual supervisors certainly differ on how much advice and what type of help with problems encountered they are capable or willing to offer. However, understanding and reflecting on students' troubles is important because it might mean changes in the methods employed in teaching future students and better decisions taken next time earlier on in the research process.

With this in mind we can now turn to a more illustrative analysis of some of the problems encountered in actual practice of one supervisor.

### **Problems on the 'supervisory journey'**

The first part of the paper has discussed the main skills when thinking about the supervisory journey. Moving on from a conceptualization of those skills, this second part of the paper now reflects on the actual practice of supervision. My own practice of supervision is based on seven years of teaching at Central European University (CEU). During this time, I have been involved in the supervision of four PhD theses and somewhere in the region of 50 MA theses. Moreover, my own supervisory journey in this respect is particularly contextual. The International Relations and European Studies Department (IRES) at CEU has the luxury of being able to choose a select few from the very best candidates from Central and Eastern Europe in particular. The vast majority of students I teach are already highly motivated in terms of their studies and, therefore, invariably provide fewer problems in terms of actual motivation.

As such, the aim here is to sketch out a number of problems that I have typically encountered as part of the journey, but which, it is accepted, may not always wholly reflect the experiences of others teaching in perhaps quite different institutions. Nevertheless, I will now go on to talk about what can be called the ‘Can I write about 9/11’ problem; the ‘But I’ve come across this other really interesting literature’ problem; and the ‘I’ll do the research first and then write it all up at the end’ problem. These are now considered in turn.

### **‘Can I write about 9/11?’**

The ‘Can I write about 9/11’ problem is perhaps more characteristic of theses at the Master’s level, and typifies a lack of initial engagement with the existing literature on the part of the student. Here, a typical exchange between supervisor and supervisee goes something like this:

*Supervisor:* So, tell me about the thesis.

*Supervisee:* Well, I want to write about 9/11.

*Supervisor:* Go on!

*Supervisee:* So, can I?

*Supervisor:* Can you what?

*Supervisee:* Write about 9/11?

*Supervisor:* Of course! But what about it?

*Supervisee:* I’m not quite sure yet.

While clearly a theme has been established, until a preliminary, or working research question is formulated the supervisory journey cannot proceed any farther. On the part of the supervisee, this involves a sustained engagement with the existing literature with a view to initially compartmentalizing what work is already out there. In the case of 9/11, the supervisee may, for example, look at the relationship between security and freedom, at whether terrorism can be deterred, or at the so-called ‘Afghan Model’ of conflict employed by the U.S. in its campaign against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Such compartmentalizing not only makes the task of reading far more manageable, but also narrows the focus in such a way that questions can effectively be raised.

Questions come out of the existing literature. And it is only when questions are actually formulated that the supervisory journey can really start. Questions define the direction of the thesis. Questions enable contributions to be made to the existing literature. Questions enable the appropriate theoretical and methodological tools to be selected, and the

relevant empirical focus established. In other words, questions allow the supervisor to start supervising.

For students, establishing a working question is often the hardest part of the process, as much as anything else because they are largely on their own in doing so. At this point, it is naturally tempting for the supervisor to step in and make life that bit easier; to sort out the existing literature for the student. Of course, some disciplinary input is surely warranted, and this may often require that the supervisor talks through some of the main themes within the given body of literature. But, and this cannot be stressed enough, to supervise is not to tell the student what to write about. The thesis is the student's own. To supervise is to oversee the process once the student knows what to write about. And this always starts with a question.

This difficult problem can only be resolved by employing the modeling skills again; that is, by taking students through the professor's own examples of preliminary research questions or analyzing other students work in the same way. This means that the student needs to see the process, and be able to work on their questions, by analogy.

Once a working question has been established, the student can then return to a more compartmentalized body of literature. And from this, the literature review chapter of the thesis can then be constructed. With the literature review in place, much of the rest of the thesis should then proceed more or less without problems. That is, however, if the 'But I've come across this other really interesting literature' problem does not come into play.

### ***'But I've come across this other really interesting literature'***

Maintaining the focus throughout the supervisory journey is often not such a problem for MA students, as the time for researching and writing the thesis itself is invariably short (here at CEU it is just two months). But with four-odd years to do so, it is a major problem for PhDs. A typical exchange in this respect looks something like the following:

*Supervisor:* How have things been going these last few months? How far have you got through writing that second chapter?

*Supervisee:* Well, not so far.

*Supervisor:* Why is that?

*Supervisee:* I was speaking to this guy who I met at the conference I went to last week, and he's also looking at 9/11. The thing is: he's interested in how organizations like Al-Qaeda are structured as networks, which makes it very difficult for hierarchical structures, such as states, to fight them.

*Supervisor:* And?

*Supervisee:* Well, the stuff he gave me to read is really interesting and I thought I could include a chapter on this.

*Supervisor:* But your thesis is about the evolution of the so-called ‘Bush Doctrine’ of pre-emptive war. Is this stuff about networks entirely relevant, then?

*Supervisee:* No, not entirely. But it is really interesting!

At some point, it is not unusual for many PhDs to think that nearly everyone else is doing more interesting work than themselves; that someone else’s thesis is much more ‘sexy’ than their own. And this is often difficult for the supervisor to manage. Naturally, PhD students want to intellectually enrich themselves through the process of research and writing. But what they need to be made aware of is just how much enrichment is actually feasible. A PhD thesis is a product, a specific type of product. And one that for the most part has to be completed in no more than four years. It is a contribution to the existing literature, but therefore necessarily only a modest one. The job of the supervisor is to get the student to produce the right product at the right time. Easier said than done!

Especially earlier on in the process, PhD students tend to think that they have all the time in the world. They do not. And here interpersonal communication skills are at a premium. Allowing supervisees to spend time reading books and articles that are superfluous to the right product is a big supervisory no, no. Students never like to be told that they cannot write about something, especially something that they find intellectually enriching. In such a situation, constructive and balanced advice is required that one the one hand keeps the supervisee firmly on the straight and narrow, while on the other hand also maintains the student’s enthusiasm for further academic endeavors. Returning to the above scenario, in this case the supervisor might suggest that the supervisee writes a joint paper with the fellow conference participant, but only *after* the work on the thesis is complete.

Of course, the opposite problem, not enough intellectual enrichment; where students suffer from a distinct lack of enthusiasm, is also a common one. I have been lucky enough myself not to have to deal with such cases, and thus I cannot offer any personal insight into its possible solution. However, on the part of the supervisor there is clearly some kind of balance to be struck here between playing hard and playing soft; playing hard in reminding the student of the consequences of producing a work that is not up to the required standards, and playing soft in trying to imbue greater enthusiasm for the subject matter through a combination of

effective interpersonal communication and intellectualizing skills. In other words, a mix of ‘listen, you have to come up with the right product here’, and ‘you have some very interesting foundations here; now let’s see if we can build on them in this way and that way’!

Not only are many research students tempted by other, related areas of literature. They are also tempted to spend too much time with just their head in a book. And this brings us now to the final problem.

### ***‘I’ll do the research first and then write it all up at the end’***

The ‘I’ll do the research first and then write it all up at the end’ problem is one of the most fundamental. And it reflects the importance of what we might call ‘thinking on paper’.

*Supervisor:* So when can I see the drafts for chapters one and two?

*Supervisee:* It’s going to be a while yet.

*Supervisor:* Oh and why’s that?

*Supervisee:* Well, I want to get all of the research done, get all of my thoughts straight first. I’ve given myself six months at the end to write everything up.

*Supervisor:* And what if there are problems after this?

As we talked about above, writing a thesis is a discipline, and crucially so a ‘written’ discipline. How our thoughts are structured, how our arguments are made, what conclusions we reach, are set out in print. As such, we must do our thinking ‘on paper’.

To not think on paper is a common mistake for many students at both the MA and the PhD level. There is an assumption that thoughts can easily remain in the head for some time before committing them to print. But, as many of us who have already gone through the process will very well know, thoughts in your head often tend not to resemble the thoughts you put on paper. Orally articulating the main ideas of thesis to the supervisor is one thing, textually articulating them to the supervisor and, eventually too, to the internal- and external examiners is really quite another.

However, somewhat unlike the ‘but I’ve come across this other really interesting literature’, the need to think on paper is perhaps a bit easier to solve. In the first part of the paper, we talked about intellectualizing; how the supervisor becomes simply a peer reviewer for the students’ work. And it is precisely through peer review that thinking on paper is facilitated. In this way, the supervisory journey must be marked by a constant drafting and re-drafting on the part of the student. Not only does this enable the supervisor to provide the necessary critique on the students work, but the

requirement to draft and re-draft in itself provides a structure within which regular meetings between supervisor and supervisee can take place. Indeed, perhaps more than anything else, this process of constant peer review is the foundation upon which the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is built.

## Concluding thoughts

So what do these three problems of supervision tell us about the supervisory journey as a whole? The first thing it tells us is that supervision is a highly important, but often problematic endeavor. If done properly, it is time consuming, it is intellectually engaging, it can be frustrating (for both supervisor and supervisee), but is ultimately highly rewarding. The second thing it tells us is that academics do not just somehow inherit the required supervisory skills. These skills have to be both learned and practiced. Of course, some skills come as part of the supervisor having already been the supervisee. But, for the most part, the skills of supervision are informed by a critical reflection on teaching and research, and the relationship between them in one's own discipline and in one's own practice. Making practices explicit and committing this discussion to paper should help in important ways too, as it allows for a more intellectual discussion on supervision and for sharing of experiences with peers. Teaching and supervision, just like research, may benefit from such disciplinary process.

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**Kinga Kas**

# **Supervision: A True Challenge for First Time Teachers**

## **Introduction**

How to motivate? How to take control? How to supervise? Many times teachers, particularly young teachers, encounter similar difficulties during their first teaching experiences. This is often attributed to the fact that they have previously been faced with completing enduring and challenging long undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate years that did not include enough exposure to practical, sound knowledge of teaching methodologies. This shortcoming is even more accented when one is given the responsibility to supervise a thesis (Ulnicane 2005, 89).<sup>1</sup> The task of supervising students is certainly one important responsibility among the numerous challenges of teaching. This paper examines ways to improve teaching skills in this field; and the current tools that are available to assist teachers with becoming better educators and supervisors.

## **Being a first-time supervisor:**

### ***A special position***

Being a young supervisor can be considered a very special position, as it may very well happen that they may have the opportunity of becoming a supervisor and to supervise other's research at the same time. A young

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<sup>1</sup> The lack on training related to supervision is discussed more at length and in detail by Lewis and Habeshaw 1997.

teacher is very likely to have spent more years as supervisee than supervisor (such has been the situation in my case as well), therefore most of the first-hand experiences related to from supervision have come from life experiences as a supervisee. Nevertheless, my own personal experiences have afforded me the occasions to act as an informal co-supervisor<sup>2</sup> for both undergraduate and graduate students and to assist with the procedure from the “other side.”

The situation of addressing double-challenges will probably make young teachers extremely sensitive to the question of supervision and force them to make special efforts to carry out tasks as best they can. Based on my own fresh experiences as a supervisee, young teachers can certainly have a picture already of what supervision means and what it requires from both sides concerned. So, perhaps the best place to begin is to think over and summarize the most significant positive and negative elements associated with supervision and to analyze why there are likes and dislikes of certain approaches and methods. This personal list which I will offer cannot be considered as general valid rules for future work, but it can serve as a tentative guideline along which educators can approach this task.

To bring in some personal examples to this discussion, I have had a rather troubled period as a doctoral supervisee, which finally ended in changing the supervisor. This example is related to my doctoral studies, and young teachers are much more likely (and entitled) to supervise undergraduate and graduate students. However, I believe there are certain factors that are equally present at all levels – albeit with different emphasis – and therefore its presentation could be interesting and illuminating for other cases as well.

The troubles that emerged in my case were quite diverse: a) we did not seem to find the right voice with each other, which resulted in misunderstandings, as well as led to a gradually growing sensation of non-confidence and mistrust on both sides; b) my supervisor – a very established and well-known figure of the Hungarian political science scene – was not very open to my special research interests, but rather absorbed in his own research and approaches on the field; and c) the supervisor was very rarely available personally, as he always had several projects outside the university going on and was often traveling. Looking back, the personal, professional and practical problems were probably rooted in the fact that I did not choose my supervisor, but that he was appointed to me in the frame of an international project for which both of us worked for a period. This, I think, is a crucial point and condition for a successful cooperation; to find the best possible person to work with whose

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<sup>2</sup> Most of my experiences I gained from the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), the Corvinus University of Budapest and the Eastern Mediterranean University of Famgusta.

competences matches the expectations (proactive approach) of the supervisee. The choice has to be made carefully, with expectations clarified in advance, so that no negative surprises will follow on either side.

In my case, if only one of the three aforementioned criteria had been the problem, there could have had a chance to resolve it. As our cooperation gradually worsened, I tried to communicate with other members of the department, and another professor I worked with earlier who was also the head of department. They did not provide much advice, so I tried as best as I could alone. When all kinds of cooperation was refused from the part of my supervisor during a whole year, which included refusing to give me a recommendation letter for a scholarship, I finally gave up the effort. At this last point (refusing recommendation) I felt that the passive resistance has turned into active resistance from which there was no turning back. When I again communicated the total failure of this process to the department, they readily supported my request to change the supervisor. It seemed that they were aware of the situation but chose to be passive about it. I, therefore, had to make the decisive step myself. It is interesting that my supervisor never actually suggested to put an end to our cooperation, but accepted it when I submitted my formal request. It shows that apparently on both sides, making an irreversible change is a very hard decision. Nevertheless, in the possession of this experience I believe now that when all three aforementioned (personal, professional and practical) conditions of a successful supervisor-supervisee relationship fail, it is better not to stretch the time before administering a radical change.

As I mentioned earlier, young teachers are most likely to supervise undergraduate, and more rarely graduate, students. My personal experience suggests that among the personal, professional and practical conditions present, this latter is of crucial importance. Being available is an issue that will come up again later in the paper, together with what is generally expected from the supervisors. These tasks and their implementation can then be supported by the young professionals' own experiences.

### ***Strong and weak points of a young (first-time) supervisor***

In the following discussion, the strong and the weak points of a young and relatively inexperienced supervisor are viewed with emphasis on the positive attributions which could partly compensate for the shortcomings of inexperience.

#### *Strong points:*

- Open attitude; takes the supervisee's research interests seriously

- Flexible and available
- Enthusiastic, willing to provide attention and assistance
- Very vivid memories and experiences of being supervised

*Weak points:*

- Concentrates too much on own personal experiences as supervisee and lead supervision accordingly
- Limited research skills compared to established and experienced scholars
- Lack of a large-scale general knowledge on the field, profound knowledge limited to one narrow field in general
- Cannot provide substantial assistance with publishing and future career

As previously presented, having fresh memories and personal experiences as a supervisee can have positive and negative sides. On the one hand, it makes the young supervisor especially receptive to needs and expectations from the supervisee; while on the other hand, the individual might focus too much on own experiences and being influenced by them might not take into consideration different scenarios, different learning, research and writing styles and different personal approaches. I mentioned already, and would like to stress it further, that since the weak points of a young supervisor cannot be overcome by a will to improve or in a short-term period, it is advisable to put more emphasis on the strong points.

Probably one of the most valuable characteristic of a young supervisor is that they will be open to different and new subjects and research methods, and less likely to be absorbed by own established interests to such an extent as older scholars. This situation unfortunately rises several times, so much so that the supervisee's actual interest may become ignored. Also observant are a tolerant, flexible attitude as opposed to a more rigid and "beaten track" approach, a smaller range of and less profound professional knowledge, and less practice in conducting research.

Other characteristics listed above, such as being available and accessible, are also points where young teachers and supervisors can be strong. As Weiner states in her first-time teacher experiences, and being a student herself she "understands the (students') need to be able to have a chance of interaction with the teacher" (Weinar 2005,107). A doctoral student, or a fresh Ph.D. as a first-time supervisor will definitely also remember and respect this need. Moreover, this understanding is usually accompanied by a certain enthusiasm, willingness and eagerness related to carrying out the task of supervising successfully – the wish to prove. In brief, supervision

for young teachers is certainly a challenge and at the same time an excellent opportunity to develop their skills further on several fields, such as in the subject of research, in structuring a research, and in communication and responsibility.

### **Learning contract and supervision log**

There exist several tools that help to provide framework and structure for the supervision process. The use of learning contracts and supervision logs could be especially helpful for young supervisors because they provide a support for mutual work by outlining the frame of co-operation, responsibilities and expectations. A contract that includes the amount and type of contact that would be acceptable at different times during the course of the work will benefit the parties to have an effective basis for discussing any deviations (Phillips-Pugh, 1987:93). These formal solutions – and most of all the supervision logs – also promote the development of a routine with regard to the interactions between supervisor and supervisee. In the appendix there are examples of the two forms<sup>3</sup> (Wisker 2005, 52, 56).

These examples should not be considered as generally valid samples. There exist many versions, always accommodated to the given situation. The advantage of these forms is that they are flexible but simultaneously provide a fair and objective framework mutually agreed upon by both parties. In other words, it can be said that both the one time contract and the regular supervision logs define the degree of interdependence between supervisor and supervisee, and serve as ground lights guiding them all through the research process.

According to my experiences, the use of learning contracts and supervision logs are not widespread in Hungary.<sup>4</sup> However, I think that these tools, especially supervision logs, can be extremely helpful during the process of supervision on all levels (undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate). It seems particularly evident in a typical, non-Anglo-Saxon environment and culture where informal agreements are not part of the tradition and where written regulations have always been numerous on the field of administration. This is one reason why I believe that where similar

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<sup>3</sup> For more samples of learning contracts see Boud 1996; Anderson et al. 1996; and Wisker, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Since I became familiar with the use of learning contracts and supervision logs recently, I have not had many chance to apply them in reality yet. Nevertheless, when I talked about them to students, they seemed to welcome the idea of supervision logs especially. I myself am using them now with my new supervisor, and although it has been a rather short period yet, it does seem to have positive effects on our working together.

characteristics prevail, written agreements (contracts) and regular notes (logs) can prove to be especially efficient tools for a smooth cooperation. It seems not only practical to keep regular notes and reminders of the research progress, which serve as references throughout the whole supervision process, but they also strengthen responsibility and exert some sort of pressure on both sides to carry out the tasks in time. Moreover, undergraduates need usually more control and a stricter guiding than graduates or post-graduates. They also lack experience concerning individual work as well as cooperation with the supervisor than students on a more advanced level. Therefore, in their case both the contract and the supervision logs gain additional importance.

However, as individuals' inclination towards the need for formality or informality, and spoken or written agreements, vary considerably, the content of learning contracts and supervision logs can be modified according to need. As mentioned earlier, there is no strict framework and the situation and the participants will decide what needs to be included and how detailed the content should be. Naturally, a short term contract as in the case of undergraduates, or a long term contract characteristic to doctoral supervision, will have different preferences, different emphasis concerning the expectations, different style of consultation, as well as different regularity of meetings.

### **Tasks of the supervisor in the different phases of supervision**

The following lists<sup>5</sup> summarize the tasks that are expected from the supervisors. They are divided into three stages, indicating the beginning, the ongoing and the final phase of both the research and the supervision process.

#### ***Stage 1: The supervisor should be expected to help students to:***

- Define research topic and refine research questions, develop a conceptual framework, approaches and outcomes, methodology
- Carry out research skill development, gain some entry into the meta-language of research
- Design outlines and develop an acceptable and doable research proposal
- Develop good time management (including starting to write early) and agree a pattern of supervision

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<sup>5</sup> The lists are based on Wisker's tables, shortened and modified in several places, op. cit. 56-59.

- Get in touch with other research students, access subject, methods contacts and reading

***Stage 2: The supervisor should be expected to:***

- Stay in touch and care about the development of the work (including reading students' work thoroughly in a reasonable and agreed time-frame, considering students' questions and give constructive and challenging criticism)
- Teach the craft of research
- Encouraging students to keep writing, revisiting proposals, rewriting and editing
- Continue to wean students away from dependency into autonomy, while supporting them through crisis in their work
- Encourage students to make use of academic support groups and networks locally, nationally and internationally, encourage their academic role development

***Stage 3: The supervisor should be expected to:***

- Encourage students to complete a first draft as soon as they can
- Encourage students to edit, edit, edit until the work is well-organized and clearly articulates an argument throughout
- Encourage students to disseminate at conferences and publications
- Encourage students to prepare for the viva, including practicing responses to general, possible and likely questions and to consider potentially problematic questions
- Encourage students to move further on in the field when they have achieved their postgraduate or undergraduate qualifications

**Some aspects of reading, thinking and writing**

Supervisors have the task to develop their students' reading, thinking and writing skills during the research process. The discussion will summarize some aspects of these skills.

Good reading practices are an inevitable condition for the development of critical and analytical thinking, and consequently for carrying out research and writing successfully. In the literature, there are three kinds of reading for students of social sciences: (Delamont et al. 1997, 57):

- reading on the topic,
- contrastive reading,
- analytical reading.

There are different kinds of reading, therefore suggesting that they influence students' thinking in ways similar to their own nature. The literature suggests that there are three different levels of thinking required for successful research (Wisker 2005, 142):

- descriptive thinking,
- conceptual and critical thinking,
- analytical thinking.

On the descriptive level, the student considers evidence and takes into account all facts needed. On the conceptual and critical level, the student identifies and examines theories and arguments. The analytical level serves to relate evidence to theories and arguments, as well as prepare an analysis of the conclusions.

As far as the skill of writing is concerned, supervisors need to be aware that there are two important aspects of good writing which have to be developed by their students. On the one hand there is a need for "taking a critical stance and arguing," while on the other hand, it is equally important for "expressing ourselves in a coherent and interesting manner" (Wisker 2005, 140).

In the second paragraph of this part I have argued that good reading practices are an inevitable condition of critical and analytical thinking, and consequently of good writing as well. The reading – thinking – writing (RTW) formula<sup>6</sup> constitutes an important part of the research process, and is also administered by supervision logs mentioned earlier. However, it needs to be stressed that the research (and simultaneously the supervision) process is not and should by no means be characterized by one big circle of RTW. The reading-thinking-writing formula is repeated many times during the research, which therefore consists of numerous small RTW circles instead of one big circle. It is all the more important to emphasize that as students often come up with the idea that they will begin the writing procedure, they must also know that this occurs only when they have finished all reading necessary. This is certainly a very dangerous approach

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<sup>6</sup> The formula and the acronym are introduced by the author.

and supervisors need to ensure that their students understand the importance of starting the writing procedure early in the research process, because writing itself will contribute to the development of ideas and arguments, as well as to the development of the art of writing.

The RTW formula has a high importance on all levels of research and supervision, be at undergraduate, graduate or post-graduate. However, on undergraduate level, the most frequent case to face for young teachers is that students are still strangers to this process and therefore their supervisors need to put more emphasis on making them understand the essence of reading-thinking-writing. It is very probable that at this level it is not only the “thinking” part where students expect and need the active help of their supervisor, but also in the reading and writing part as well. In practice it means that we do not only discuss what has been read: trying to interpret, develop and challenge thoughts, conclusions, new ideas, and guide the dissertation into the right direction(s), but we as supervisors must also develop the students’ ability of exercising the art of reading and writing.

At undergraduate level, it might even mean going through several articles and passages together, including controlling questions, as well as formulating some key thoughts and hypotheses and structuring the table of contents together. In the case of my undergraduate students, I was practically forced to give a private course on “How to write a thesis?” that included lessons on reading and writing. I do not find it a very fortunate situation if the major part of common work is spent on the reading and writing process. I believe that the supervisor’s principal task should be to provide assistance in the thinking part of the research process, at all levels. However, I also believe that at undergraduate level the balance is almost equilibrated between assistance in thinking on one side and assistance in reading and writing on the other side. As we proceed to higher levels – graduate and post-graduate level – this balance will gradually shift to the benefit of the thinking process as the main element of cooperation between the supervisor and the student, meaning a permanent exchange of ideas, challenges of thoughts and development of critical and analytical thinking.

## **Conclusion**

In this essay I have discussed several elements, tasks and methods of supervision, which will hopefully provide both some theoretical and practical help for young teachers, and young supervisors. Three major conditions of successful cooperation between supervisor and supervisee have been presented: a) personal, b) professional and c) practical. I argued

that if none of these three conditions are fulfilled up to a satisfactory extent, the cooperation cannot be successful. I would also add that in my view at least two of the aforementioned conditions have to be met in order to ensure a fruitful outcome at the end of the supervisory process. As I said earlier in the essay, it is better to adopt a proactive behavior and make the selection of the supervisor a very careful decision.

Two tools were also introduced that are destined to help to give framework and structure to the cooperation process. The learning contract and the supervision logs help outline the frame of co-operation, responsibilities and expectations, and also promote the development of a routine with regard to the interactions between supervisor and supervisee. It was noted that there exist no generally valid samples, but numerous versions which are always accommodated to the given situation.

This paper has concluded the main tasks of the supervisor in the different phases of supervision, which might serve as guidelines for young teachers to carry out their task responsibility. This discussion also reviewed the accepted procedures of reading, thinking and writing (RTW) – key elements of the supervisory process. There was also a brief review of the three different kinds of reading (on the topic, contrastive and analytical) and, parallel to them, the three different levels of thinking (descriptive, critical and analytical). As for the skill of writing, the key words were critical, coherent and interesting.

Finally, my paper dwelled on the importance of the RTW formula with regard to the balance among the three elements, suggesting that as we reach higher levels of degrees of education (from undergraduate to postgraduate), the thinking element – a common exchange of ideas, challenge of thoughts and development of critical and analytical thinking – is likely to gain more and more emphasis during the supervisory process and less attention shall have to be paid on the reading and writing elements.

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## Appendix: Examples of learning contracts and supervision logs

### LEARNING CONTRACT

- Research student:
- Supervisor:
- Title/research topic:
- Date of registration:
- Approximate proposed date of completion:
- Agreed frequency of supervisions:

#### **Research student: I agree to:**

- Negotiate supervision agendas, send work in advance
- Communicate about questions, blocks, problems (usually in short e-mails)
- Produce work at agreed intervals and work steadily

#### **Supervisor: I agree to:**

- Negotiate supervision agendas
- Respond to short questions immediately (e-mail)
- Read work sent in, comment, advise, determine agenda, action points
- Advise on accessing the research community

Signed.....  
Addresses and contact points.....

### SUPERVISION LOG

Date, time and length of supervision with.....  
Agenda and agreed discussion areas.....  
Work agreed for supervision.....  
Questions.....  
Issues discussed.....  
Progress made.....  
Conclusions and agreed work towards next supervision.....

**Student**.....  
**Supervisor**.....

**Patrycja Matusz Protasiewicz**

## **How to Supervise Students in Writing Essays and in Avoiding Plagiarism**

University teachers face many challenges. Firstly, pursuant to the idea of university, they should teach students how to think independently, analyze facts, and conclude and paraphrase logical utterances. In my opinion, one of the most difficult skills which students, especially those attending humanistic courses, need to learn is to formulate written papers. The role of a teacher in this process is not an easy one.

The teaching system does not usually provide a teacher with enough time to acquaint a student with the most difficult aspects of the art of writing. Overloaded syllabuses imply that essays or any longer written works are only a result of completing a course in a particular subject without extra time devoted to it. The teacher's task is to correct and mark obtained work.

As I learned from my own experience, gained throughout my 4-year teaching practice at the Institute of International Studies at the University of Wrocław<sup>1</sup>, students have most problems with originality, choice of appropriate materials and their proper selection, valuation and interpretation. Nowadays, as Internet access is so common, students tend to base their work on Internet sources more and more; also, they do not bother to use more valuable content-relevant materials available in a library. Students have difficulty estimating the value of the Internet sources they

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<sup>1</sup> I have been teaching International Migration Theory, Immigration Policy in the European Union, The Problems on the Multicultural Society to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years students.

are using, and they often rely on unverified materials, data and definitions provided by commonly known portals (e.g. definitions taken from Wikipedia). Furthermore, students very often rely on information found in newspapers and weekly magazines but they are unable to evaluate their content relevance or ideological base.

Common access to innumerable amounts of information and materials, available on the Internet, entails the temptation of making the difficult art of writing easier by downloading essays from the Internet. After simply conducting a search by typing in the subject we are interested in, the Internet offers us a high number of essays, ready to download. Websites like databases containing ready end-of-term essays also appear and they allow one to download a completed text upon paying a certain fee. The temptation is even higher as, due to a vast amount of materials available, it is more and more difficult for teachers to detect and verify plagiarized work. Therefore, teachers face a new challenge: finding ways to prevent students from committing plagiarism. As I know from my own experience, plagiarism is not always the result of a conscious decision, but is often done rarely, which constitutes “borrowing” of the intellectual property of others. The basic definition of plagiarism, “the practice of using or copying someone else’s idea or work and pretending that you thought of it or created it” (*Advanced Learner’s* 2003), is not precise. Consequently, not all students are aware plagiarism is committed if:

- “the writer has only changed around a few words and phrases or changed the order of the original’s sentences;”
- “the writer has failed to cite a source for any of the ideas or facts” (*Advanced Learner’s* 2003).

Students very often do not know how to use annotations and what kind of information they should refer to. Therefore, when preparing students for writing their essays, I devote one tutorial to annotations, reminding them that they should include reference to sources when:

- they precisely quote author’s words (it is often forgotten and therefore worth noting that we place quotation marks between inverted commas);
- they cite the source of information used in their essays (paying particular attention to citing sources of numerous information, graphs, facts, etc.).

When informing the students on this regards, I always suggest them a simple exercise which will help them in avoiding plagiarism. For example,

if they want to discuss someone's thought or way of interpretation, they should, upon reading the text, cover it with one hand and discuss it using their own words, later verifying that they did not use the same phrases as the author. I also remind my students that paraphrasing the text does not relieve them of providing its source.

Though one cannot forbid students from using the Internet, it is worth telling them at the beginning of the term that essays based solely on Internet sources will be marked lower. It is also possible to provide students with a list of websites, which they should not use when writing essays. In my opinion, every teacher should prepare his/her own list of "forbidden" websites relating to his/her course. For example, in my course, the Wikipedia Encyclopedia Online, the common Polish search vehicles ([wp.pl](http://wp.pl), [onet.pl](http://onet.pl)) and also some specific newspapers (of which I know the author's are unspecialized, e.g. concerning the international migration issues) are not accepted as viable literature and sources of information.

To sum up my argument, it is extremely important to prepare students for writing essays and to cover all technical and content – relevant aspects. In my view, despite the necessity to carry out the curriculum of a particular subject, it is worth spending at least one class on such issues.

According to my experience we should focus on the following issues:

- the choice of sources – it is worth going through the most important authors dealing with our field of interest, as well as science magazines and websites of organizations and institutions which present verified materials, such as reliable analyses and reports which are up to the university level;
- plagiarism – how to avoid unconscious plagiarism, how to provide documentary evidence for information used in a text, i.e. what annotations there are and how/when to use them;
- the construction of our work – how to search for a thesis, how to present our arguments and finally how to draw conclusions;
- why we should pay attention to the accuracy of our language and how to avoid making grammatical, spelling and punctuation mistakes (every term I remind them to use the "Spell Check" option/dictionary in Word);
- why it is worth writing an essay yourself;
- the consequences of having our essay detected as plagiarized.

Considering the experience I have gained during my classes, I can assure that discussing the most important issues regarding writing essays at the beginning of the term will, firstly, allow one to avoid misunderstandings

(concerning the form, volume, content –relevance, etc.) and secondly make one's students aware that the writing of an essay is not a task which may be fulfilled within one evening, but which requires preparation throughout the entire term in order to be properly completed.

Also, the fact of having a discussion at the beginning of the term will make students aware of the advantages resulting from taking the time and trouble to analyze source materials and to express their own thoughts in writing – as only such essays may get high marks. It is of paramount importance to make students aware that writing and presenting their views are indispensable skills in the contemporary world, regardless of one's occupation.

From my own experience, I can attest that students are not always conscious of what constitutes plagiarism and of the importance of writing papers independently. According to Irina Mattova's very interesting text about plagiarism, lack of motivation can be traced as a reason for plagiarism. Mattova suggests that: "it is possible to motivate students in different ways. One can emphasize, for example that once having acquired writing skills, they will be able to elaborate their thesis easily and with a higher quality" (Mattova 2005).

The last important issue regarding the relation between a teacher and a student during the process of creating a written essay is its mark. It should be possible, throughout the entire term, for students to consult their work at different stages of its creation. The final marking of their work requires a calm and factual discussion concerning their mistakes and the possibility of their correction. It is important to remember that students who have devoted a lot of their time to create "their own work" are very sensitive to criticism. Thus, the mark they receive should not de-motivate them, but instead it should encourage them to make corrections and it should give them hope for learning to ultimately write a correct essay themselves.

Finally, I would like to comment upon my method of correcting work submitted by my students with regards to detecting plagiarisms. When checking essays, I mainly pay attention to particularly good and strikingly brilliant ones which contain much information and to those which I qualify as "patchworks," containing passages both of very good and of much worse quality. I check such essays for plagiarized passages by using commonly known search vehicles like Yahoo, Google, Lycos or AltaVista, and also a payable service at <http://www.plagiat.pl/> which is accessible in Poland. It happens quite often that the language used in some parts of students' essays recalls a style of a known newspapers or authors, in which case I make use of press archives. Of course, I inform my students at the beginning of each term that plagiarism is unacceptable and constitutes theft

and fraud, stating that upon suspecting an essay to be downloaded, I would try to find the original piece of work. Such an attitude discourages some students from these such practices. According to Mary Hricko's very interesting text, "Since plagiarism can occur in any classroom, it is pertinent that *all* instructors review the existing policy on plagiarism at the beginning of each new term, even if the course they teach is not on writing intensively. University policy should first define plagiarism and then offer an explanation on the types of offences that can be considered to be the forms of academic misconduct" (Hricko) In my experience from my university, and also in many others in Poland, plagiarism is fought over only in the case of its detection in an MA thesis. There are no uniform regulations regarding teachers' punishment to students which have plagiarized. In my classes, I ask these students to write a new and longer essay on a new subject, and to explain to all others in the class, why it isn't worth doing so.

I would like to end my paper with a quotation taken from a text by Julie J.C.H. Ryan "Plagiarism is alive and well on campuses and in cyberspace. But educators should take some solace in the fact that while the Internet is a useful resource for plagiarists, it is also an excellent tool to use against them" (Ryan). Plagiarism detection also means indirect appreciation of students who, when writing themselves, do not always obtain the highest mark.

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**Inga Ulnicane**

## **Conclusions: Inspiring Advice on Motivation and Supervision**

Teaching is very much context-specific. Each discipline, subject, university and country has its own formal and informal traditions, rules and cultures of teaching and learning. However, the epsNet initiative on the experience of first-time university teachers clearly proves that there are many generic issues in teaching. As this third volume convincingly demonstrates, there is a great, and so far largely unexploited, potential for mutual learning and knowledge transfer across disciplines and countries.

Although this initiative started mainly as a forum for young political science teachers to share their teaching experiences, contributions to this volume also come from teachers of philosophy, sociology and economics. The authors in this volume share their teaching experiences in a wide variety of courses, including Management in Social Work, Business Finance, Econometrics, European Integration, International Migration Theory and many others. The contributions reflect teaching experiences in various countries: Slovak Republic, France, Romania, Czech Republic, the United States, Hungary, Germany and Poland.

Such a truly interdisciplinary and international perspective provides a good overview of diversity as well as common patterns in teaching methods and experiences. Hopefully, reading about experiences from other disciplines and countries can trigger new ideas for more creative and productive teaching in one's own disciplinary and national setting.

The aim of this concluding chapter is to summarize and discuss some of the main ideas, arguments and advice from contributions in this volume on motivation and supervision of students.

## **Motivation: Experience**

Teaching will be successful and beneficial if both students as well as teachers are motivated to teach and learn. Students have to be ready to work hard in order to acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers can boost motivation of students by being committed and enthusiastic about their subject areas.

### ***Motivating students***

Motivating students is about getting out the best of them, discovering their hidden potential and making teaching more pleasant for students as well as teachers. However, in real life teachers face different audiences. Sometimes they meet the blank faces of disinterested students, and none in the audience appreciates their efforts in preparing classes and delivering courses. On the other hand, there are also classes where everyone is involved, discussions are stimulating and students even wish the lecture could be longer. Most classes probably fall somewhere between these two extremes. However, the question is – what can a teacher do to stimulate interest in students? One approach is to make the course challenging in all possible ways. However, this approach rests on an assumption that there is an intrinsic curiosity and ambition inside each student, to develop her knowledge, understandings and skills. If there are students who lack such curiosity and ambition altogether, universities should have various means to get rid of them.

### ***Challenge-based class format, course content and exams***

The motivation of students can be facilitated by making class format, course content and exams more challenging. One way to challenge students is to have the seminar part of the course first, and only then followed by a lecture on the same topic. Students then have to handle reading material on their own, often lacking the general background information. Although at first glance this might be frustrating for students, it makes them think harder about the topic and listen more carefully later when background material is later explained in the lecture. Another challenging seminar format envisages assignment of the same text for two students. The first student presents her understanding of the assigned text, usually for 10 to 15 minutes. The second comments on the understanding of the first student, whether the interpretation was correct and the points made by the first student justified. This arrangement tends to improve their performance because of the intrinsic competitiveness of the students.

In order to make course content more challenging it should be structured by problems and issues, rather than historical chronology. For example, in teaching philosophy course structures should not start with sketches of the early Greek period, that then gradually move through the dark Middle Ages into the bright modern world, concluding with important figures from the last century. Rather, it would be more productive to concentrate on controversial issues such as the existence of God, free will, liberty, abortion or thinking machines, which are not only philosophical but also attract strong interest from students.

In terms of exams, it might be useful to go beyond standard methods of multiple choice and essay exams which might only tell the teacher what she already knows. The teacher could come up with more complex methods. She can assign a take-home exam consisting of three questions with a strong word limit: e.g. to not use more than 250 words. Such a strong word limit makes students think twice about the content of their essays. Other challenging methods of examination might include open book and oral exams. Open book exams give students a false indication of teacher charity when in fact there is none. In such a case students tend to undervalue the expected work load and level of stress. Only when writing their essays will they learn their mistake, and be forced to put in more effort. Oral exams give unprecedented access to student thinking, and allow carefully targeted questions in accordance to their actual performance. However, they are more suitable for small groups.

### ***Teaching as a partnership***

It might be useful to see teaching as a partnership process where the result greatly depends on good cooperation between both sides. A good teacher has to ask herself: ‘am I clear, convincing, helpful, entertaining, reasonable?’ First-time teachers typically concentrate on their class performance, which absorbs most of their energy. Therefore, they have less time and energy for interaction with students, to find out and reflect on their interests, needs, intellectual abilities, personal problems, etc.

In order to win over students’ minds, teachers have to consider how to make their classes more appealing, interesting and useful, and how to get students more involved. Useful tools might be: a variety of activities during each class (i.e., discussions, group/pair activities, video, team homework with presentations, joint seminar paper reviews and the like), which help to keep every class different and therefore unpredictable and intriguing; relating the study material to students’ lives and areas of their interest; sticking to the “wait time”: after asking a question the teacher remains silent until someone in the classroom takes the responsibility to break the silence.

## ***Teacher motivation***

The motivation of the teacher herself has to be constantly built and rebuilt. The basic toolkit for doing this contains a true interest in teaching, putting a reasonable load on one's own shoulders, analysing problems, making improvements for following courses, keeping an ongoing teaching diary, collecting student feedback and, last but not least, proper relaxation.

People usually become university teachers after having been excellent students who still have a profound interest in some area of research. Moreover, many early educators wish to pass what they have learnt themselves on to their younger colleagues. Still, what is most important is a deep interest in teaching, which has to be present or one can hardly be an inspiring teacher. However, young teachers sometimes have to teach courses which are more or less different than the focus of their research. Then the teacher can integrate some issues of her research, include interesting readings in the syllabus, and encourage students to bring their individual contributions to the course. It is also very crucial to set realistic goals for the course, and prepare a balanced syllabus. The teacher has to rationally calculate how much time and effort she can spend preparing for each lesson, counselling and evaluating student performance.

If a serious problem happens during the semester, a careful reflection on the issue is very important and necessary adjustments have to be made either during the course, or in the next cycle. It is important to explain to students the reasons for using particular teaching methods, assignments and assessment repeatedly underlining exactly what students have to do in order to improve their skills. An ongoing diary might help in analysing problems during the semester. The teacher can write about what happened in the lesson, positive and negative experiences, reactions from students, the level of their preparation, etc. An ongoing diary might help the teacher's self-motivation and a realistic evaluation of the whole course. Another strong motivating tool can be discussions with other colleagues, who can often give valuable advice as they have often faced similar dilemmas.

## **Motivation: Methods**

Motivation is a complex and ongoing task and there is no one single best solution, which can be applied in all situations. Contributors suggested a wide variety of methods, demonstrating their potential, limitations as well as possible synergies between different methods.

### ***Motivation as engaged learning***

An important goal of teaching is the engagement of students in the learning process. Students bring different initial expectations to the classroom. Internal motivation linked directly to the subject is present only among a minority of mostly graduate students. Many undergraduate students come to the class with an ‘external motivation’ consisting of grades, diplomas, stipends or other future rewards gained through high marks or a diploma.

There are various methods to increase motivation. First, it is necessary to demolish a perception of inability or failure and, provide encouragement so that the students believe they have a reasonable chance of success. Second, some degree of freedom can be given to the students as to how they actually perform the tasks or learn the subject matter. This principle is based on the assumption that students are adult learners who need choice and freedom above and beyond direction and authority in order to be motivated. Third, student curriculum specialization should be allowed as soon as possible. Specialization entails studying more in-depth, difficult, complex and ambiguous issues. Finally, it is important to set clear rules and provide adequate information on what is expected from the students.

However, teaching never occurs in isolation. It is strongly influenced by the professional and institutional context, which is beyond the scope of the individual teacher to cope with or change. Teaching is much more difficult when there is inadequate respect for the profession of teaching, based on simplistic notions of the easiness of teaching. It will also be less productive in an environment that is not conducive to learning (a failed educational system), and where no connection between education/degree and future jobs exists.

### ***Positive feedback as an instrument for emotional motivation***

Cognitive means of stimulating students are useful and important, but they are not enough on their own, because most ‘human triggers’ are emotional. Students prefer classes where they feel valuable, and where the teacher shows empathy and care. They like teachers who communicate outside classes, encourage and smile at them. They also appreciate the teacher’s willingness to treat them as individuals, and not as “a whole class,” and to address them by name.

One instrument of emotional motivation is positive feedback. Feedback is an important tool for providing accurate data on students’ performance. Unfortunately, this tool has been transformed into an instrument of criticism and blame. It is more productive to praise the student for some

positive reasons, even if this means mentioning the effort of writing the paper, attending the class, the handwriting, etc. Positive feedback is a tool to strengthen the positive things students do. This motivates them to be involved and participate more. Students appreciate the fairness of the evaluation, and especially the presence of clear and detailed feedback, as well as explanations about their work.

### ***Tools for continuous learning and better attendance***

Many teachers have realised that it takes a special effort to tackle problems such as students preparing only for exams and poor attendance. One method to encourage continuous learning is to assign small tests during the semester. Such assignments contribute towards the students' activity. They are more able to communicate about the particular topic, and lessons seem more professional and active. Moreover, it might also be useful if the teacher, in a friendly way, reminds students on a regular basis of their duties: to be prepared to each lesson, to read related literature, journals and newspapers, and to also ask the teacher for explanations if they do not understand something.

In order to increase attendance a teacher can introduce compulsory compensation for non-participation in a lesson. A student who has not been present has to submit an essay focused on the topic she has missed, and to present it in the class. Such a compulsory compensation may serve many purposes. Students improve their writing and presentation skills as well as improve their attendance.

### **Effective preparation**

A well-known problem for first-time teachers is how to prepare a seminar maximizing the benefit for the students, and at the same time spending a reasonable amount of time on preparation. They can enthusiastically begin by collecting an abundance of materials for each seminar, but this may lead to the problem that the materials are inconsistent in terminology, approaches and methods used. Moreover, the teacher has spent too much time in preparation. One way of avoiding these problems is to use a regular textbook for lectures and seminars and adopt it as basic for the lesson, which can be then enriched with further material.

Moreover, many publishers of the textbooks provide web based supplementary materials for teachers as well as students. Teachers are provided with an instructor manual with the solutions to problems, pre-prepared PowerPoint presentations and graphs and also a test bank, which contains questions and topics for essays. These materials can be very

useful. Publishers also provide various supplementary materials for students: interactive learning, tests, keywords and even crosswords.

### ***Motivation in quantitatively oriented courses***

It is always more pleasant to provide some positive motivation than to come up with negative incentives (punishments, threats, sanctions, etc). In the case of quantitatively oriented courses, the teacher can come up with a set of positive arguments why students have to make an effort to learn and practice their skills in working with software. One argument that can be put forward is that working with software might be useful in students' future careers and save much of their time. This can also be practically demonstrated by making a small test where students first solve an exercise using only a calculator. Then they solve the same exercise using a standard office program, and finally they do it with special software. Thus, they can see for themselves that the special software is the fastest. Second, students might be reminded that different types of software are very similar. Thus if they learn to work with one, it is always easier to get used to working with others. It might also be helpful if students can take home a test version of this software. It normally works for one semester, and allows students can to practice their exercises at home.

### **Originality in motivation**

It is sometimes possible to devise very creative class and course formats, such as simulations and online courses in an international setting, to stimulate a deeper student interest in a subject.

### ***Simulation of European Council***

In courses on European integration, teachers are often faced with the tasks of explaining and re-explaining the co-decision procedure, the three pillars of the Maastricht Treaty, etc. One method that gives students a hands-on feel of the European Union is the simulation of European Council meetings and negotiations. There are two stages in the simulation: preparations that precede the actual negotiations, and the "negotiations" themselves.

During the preparatory stages, "delegations" must write a policy paper stating their countries' views and addressing the agenda that has been set for the Council meeting. In order to prepare these papers, students are encouraged to refer to the websites of the European institutions as well as those of the governments of the member states. The professor also puts

other documents, brochures and books at their disposal in the library, and they are encouraged to utilize the library's online newspaper and magazine subscriptions. Policy papers are then put on a website, allowing students to prepare for negotiations, positioning themselves with regards to the positions of the other Member States.

The simulation gives students an opportunity to grasp the issues at hand outside the typical textbooks, and to understand the very real difficulties with deciding big issues with 25 member states sitting around a table, each with their own agenda. It also enables students to go and research policy positions that they would otherwise not do, motivating them and getting them personally involved.

### ***Online course in international setting***

Modern information and communication technologies allow for the development of online courses among universities in different countries. Such a course has been developed among the Political Science institutes of Dresden, Prague and Wroclaw, involving tutors and students from all three institutions. The student task was to analyse different cases of the three states' foreign policies during 1990s. Online work during the four-week modules was supplemented with four face-to-face weekend workshops. Students had to organize their work and divide their tasks (searching for additional literature, looking up and summarizing sources in the national language, actual writing of the final paper, etc) online. Tutors could oversee their work by reading their intermediate results as well as by following debates in the online forums. The final group papers were subsequently presented and debated at face-to-face workshops.

Despite meeting their colleagues exclusively online for most of the time, the students in tri-national working groups managed to develop a tangible team spirit. This can be regarded as one of the primary motivational advantages of the group work: At the emotional level of the learning process, it helps to go beyond the purely academic world and to create a situation close to what the students will most likely experience in their professional career.

### **Supervision**

Supervision is a highly important but often problematic endeavour. If done properly, it is time consuming, intellectually engaging, but can also

be frustrating (for both supervisor and supervisee), but is ultimately highly rewarding.

### ***Supervisor skill set***

Supervisory skills have to be both learned and practiced. The general skills needed for successful supervision come under four categories: “modelling skills,” “interpersonal communication skills,” “intellectualising skills,” and “trouble shooting skills.” Some of these are more academic while others are more social. Modelling skills entail translating the research process into meaningful stages and manageable tasks for the student. And these need to be fulfilled in an appropriate time frame. Only the supervisor, as an accomplished researcher, really knows what the process and the product should look like, and what the different possible research designs really mean in practice. Moreover, all encounters between tutors and students require effective communication skills: active listening, the ability to offer constructive and balanced advice or criticism, the ability to identify and deal with communication breakdowns and diffuse tension or negative feelings. Intellectualising skills involve analysing, rephrasing, critiquing, peer reviewing and co-constructing the place of the student’s work in the discipline.

Finally, the troubleshooting skill is a more practical area, but one which demands creativity, reflexivity and a higher level of ‘pedagogical intelligence’, as well as emotional intelligence on the part of the supervisor. Issues can include writer’s block, or an inability to start writing, overload of reading and theory, multiple crises of confidence in one’s level of preparation or ability, stress associated with public presentations and defences, tensions between invested into research versus publication (or conference presentations), and stress caused by career choices and further research options. The supervisor can help the student negotiate such problems by offering personal examples, tried and trusted methods to overcome major blockages, or by helping students find help from others.

### ***Learning contracts and supervision logs***

In order to provide framework and structure for the supervision process, it might be useful to prepare a learning contract and supervision log. In a learning contract, supervisor and supervisee agrees on the research topic, approximate date of completion, frequency of supervisions, as well as the duties of student and supervisor. Student duties can include sending work in advance, communicating about questions and problems, producing work at agreed intervals and working steadily. Supervisor duties include

responding to questions, reading the work sent in, commenting, advising, determining the agenda, etc. The supervision log is filled in for each student and supervisor meeting, and includes information on the agenda of the meeting, questions, issues discussed, progress made, conclusions and agreed work towards the next supervision meeting.

Such written agreements and regular notes might be efficient tools for smooth cooperation. It is not only practical to keep regular notes and reminders of the research progress, which serve as references throughout the whole supervision process, but it also strengthens responsibility and exert some pressure on both sides to carry out their tasks in time.

### ***Supervision at different stages of the thesis***

The tasks of the supervisor differ at various stages of the research process: the beginning, the ongoing, and the final stage. In the beginning, the supervisor has to help define the research topic, research question and help to develop a conceptual framework and an acceptable research proposal as well as discuss time management and agree on a pattern of supervision. In the ongoing stage of the research, the teacher has to stay in touch, read the student's work, give constructive and challenging criticism, encourage the student to keep writing and rewriting, encourage the student to make use of academic networks nationally and internationally, etc. At the final stage, the supervisor has to encourage the student to complete the first draft as soon as possible, and to edit until the work is well-organized and clearly articulates the argument, help the student to prepare for the defence, including practicing possible questions and considering potentially problematic questions. Finally, the supervisor has to encourage the student to move further on in the field when they have achieved their qualifications.

### ***Avoiding plagiarism***

An important part of supervising the thesis and essays is avoiding plagiarism. One reason for plagiarism is that students very often do not know how to use annotations, and when to include references. Therefore, it is particularly important that students have clear guidelines and instructions on different types of referencing: direct quotations, paraphrasing, etc.

Moreover, students today have a strong temptation to avoid the hard work of writing essays and thesis by downloading ready-made essays or parts of the thesis from the internet. It is very important to explain why it is worth writing essays and thesis themselves. It has to be demonstrated that there are clear advantages from putting effort and hard work in searching

and analyzing materials independently, as well as in articulating and expressing their own arguments in writing. Students have to be aware that writing, articulating and presenting their arguments is one of the indispensable professional career skills, and that writing of essays or thesis is an opportunity to learn and practice this skill.

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This volume provides plenty of ideas, real-life stories and advice on how to motivate and supervise students. As such it might serve many purposes. It can provide support and encouragement to teachers. In this volume they can see that their colleagues have encountered similar problems, made similar mistakes and have found ways to make their teaching more productive. It can also be used as a practical toolkit on how to organize supervision, or how to fight plagiarism. It seeks to offer an inspiration for trying out original and creative teaching methods such as simulations and international online courses. And hopefully this epsNet initiative can develop as an ongoing discussion forum among teachers on their teaching experiences. We hope that the third volume of the epsNet teaching political science series encourages new participants to join this initiative, attend the workshops and contribute to the next volumes. Information on workshops and future calls for papers can be found at: <http://www.fses.uniba.sk/staff/gregusova/English/EPSNet/>. See you in Ljubljana 2007 or at other meetings of passionate teachers.



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3. Bob Reinalda and Ewa Kulesza, **The Bologna Process. Harmonizing Europe's Higher Education. Including the Essential Original Texts**, Opladen and Bloomfield Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich Publishers, June 2005 ISBN 3-938094-39-7

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### **d) Virtual Learning Units**

1. Funda Tekin, *Three Virtual EU E-learning Units. Unit 1: The European Convention and the IGC; Unit 2: The European Union as International Actor; Unit 3: The EU Institutions and Modes of Governance*, University of Cologne: Jean Monnet Chair Wolfgang Wessels, 2005 (available at [www.epsNet.org](http://www.epsNet.org))

### **e) Electronic Journal Kiosk Plus**

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**Kiosk Plus: THE NET Journal of Political Science**, with articles about epsNet projects (Features), the Profession, Teaching and Training, as well as Reviews, Open Forum, Nethesis, (the PhD students' platform) and Window. First issue (1/1): June 2003; second issue (1/2): November 2003; third issue (2/1): June 2004; fourth issue (3/1): June 2005

### **f) Other Electronic Publications**

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