

# Creative Teaching and Learning Techniques



## Presentation Summary

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## **Introduction**

The following information is a summary of the Creative Teaching Techniques workshop, August 21 2009. I hope that this will become a useful resource and welcome any comments or questions around its content.

This document is an outline of my teaching journey, philosophy and examples of strategies in practice. Although these methods are described in relation to my field of practice, they could easily be adapted for use in other disciplines.

Having worked in three Private Training Enterprises prior to my employment at Wintec, I understand there are challenges that face both large and small organizations when implementing change. In smaller providers resources and funding may be limited. In larger institutes funding may be available but it is certainly not easy to get hold of. The many layers of management and huge amount of red tape can slow down or stop a project if not managed correctly.

I am certain that if an educator is passionate about valid teaching and learning methods that will benefit students, they will find a way for fresh strategies to be implemented.

## **Teaching Philosophies**

My practice experienced a huge shift when I changed my perspective on teaching and learning. I stopped saying, "this is how I teach" and "this is how the programme is delivered". Instead I asked the student "how do you want to learn?"

Incorporating a variety of resources, modes of delivery and strategies ensures that all learning styles are appealed to and promotes constant learner engagement. Regular feedback from students' tests this theory and enables adjustments to be made to suit every class. Reflecting on how these concepts fit with my teaching has given clarity to my philosophies.

My teaching philosophies are based on three main principles:

- Collaborative practice
- Authentic learning
- Flexible delivery

The need for my teaching to be both collaborative and authentic arose from my own experiences as a hairdressing trainee. I struggled to learn practical skills in formal teacher/student settings. When given the opportunity to work alongside and assist peers and more qualified stylists my confidence and abilities grew quickly. I found that sharing ideas in an authentic learning environment encouraged passion and excitement for learning. When immersed in the culture of a workplace it is difficult not to inherit industry

practices and skills. *"According to Larve, authentic or real world contexts apprentice learners from "novice" or "newcomer" to "expert" or "old-timer" status."*Smith & Pourchot (1998)

I began to understand the value of flexible delivery when I was studying part-time towards my Bachelor of Applied Social Science (BASS) with an adult education endorsement, while working full-time as a tutor. Now that I have a young child I can see what a support a more flexible course structure can be to parents. Industry-based and on-line learning has helped implement this concept into my practice. I have also been able to use this technology to develop collaborative teaching and learning strategies, combining these two principles.

*"Rather than simply duplicating existing teaching and assessment practices, online development was seen as an opportunity for exploring new ways of teaching and learning using technology, including collaborative teaching processes.... Teaching staff are challenging the way that they deliver content and are creating new opportunities for students to learn in collaborative and highly interactive ways".* Ellis & Phelps (2000)

I was able to build on these concepts when I begun to study educational theory. Finding evidence to support my beliefs about education gave me the confidence to share my philosophies with colleagues and eventually design a course based on the three underlying principles.

## **Timetabling**

Key areas that enable the Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 to be flexible for students are; the online theory components, fresh approach to timetabling course hours and opportunities to learn in industry throughout the programme. During the first semester, theory based learning and practical demonstrations are most prominent. As the programme progresses, students must practice each skill until they can demonstrate these to a certain standard on a set number of occasions. This formula is prescribed and closely monitored by the Hairdressing Industry Training Organisation (HITO).

On a traditional hairdressing programme, students attend classes within set daytime hours and may attend work experience as a 1 – 2 week block or on set days. Being a practical programme that requires specialist equipment, it is a challenge to deviate from this formula.

I worked closely with colleagues and management to ensure that the Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 is structured in a way that allows students to fit their training around family, religious, cultural and work commitments. Students attend class for the equivalent of three days per week. During the first semester, one three-hour session is in the evening and two sessions a week are repeated so that students can choose to attend in the morning or afternoon. The rest of the course hours are spent completing the required industry-based work experience and online learning components.

## Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 – Semester 1

	Mon	Tue	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<b>8.30 – 12pm</b>	<b>Morning group</b>			<b>All students attend</b>	<b>Morning Group</b>		
<b>1pm – 4.30pm</b>	<b>Afternoon group</b>	<b>All students attend</b>		<b>Afternoon group</b>			
<b>5pm – 8pm</b>		<b>All students attend</b>					

The students can use any time they are not attending their set classes to complete their online learning and 80 hours required work experience for the year. Students can complete their work experience in blocks over the semester breaks if they prefer.

### **Client days**

In the second and third semester the timetable becomes three set days. This is because most of the theory has been delivered and students are now required to collect evidence of their skills. The class is now run like a commercial salon, booking in clients and completing services to industry standards. This concept maximises the students' authentic learning experience and employment opportunities. As the initial delivery of each subject is concluded, students can offer this learning as a new service on client days in the Wintec salon. By the beginning of semester three, each student is working like an industry professional managing their own column in the appointment book and developing a clientele. Students are responsible for helping manage the salon, often meeting to design and review salon policy.



Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 students working in the Wintec salon on a client night. 2008

### Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 – Semester 2 & 3

	Mon	Tue	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<b>8.30 – 12pm</b>	<b>All students attend</b>			<b>All students attend</b>			
<b>1pm – 4.30pm</b>	<b>All students attend</b>	<b>All students attend</b>		<b>All students attend</b>			
<b>5pm – 8pm</b>		<b>All students attend</b>					

### Work Experience Opportunities

Many of the students complete their work experience during semester 2 and secure part-time jobs in salons. They are able to collect the required evidence in salons in place of attending some classes. This ensures that the timetable is still flexible where required and enables students to earn while completing their course requirements.



This system is a support for employers who are held responsible by HITO for training their apprentices. I often meet with the students' employers to discuss how we can assist each other in streamlining each individual's training so they can gain qualified staff trained to a high standard in a short time frame. When students complete the Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 they are required to be employed in a commercial hairdressing salon for a certain time period before completing their final unit standards to become qualified. When employers invest time in the students' training during the course, they usually employ them at course completion, sign them on as apprentices and support them to complete these final unit standards.

### **Online Learning**

Through professional development courses on e-learning, I was able to develop the confidence I required to set up online courses as part of the Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4. I worked with IT professionals to develop two courses by using the Moodle programme. These courses currently include:

- Case studies
- Discussions
- Personal journals where students reflect on theory and practical sessions on a weekly basis

- Links to web sites that feature successful international stylists, discussions are based around the various collections and video clips viewed on these sites
- Self test quizzes that allow students to check their knowledge while studying towards assessments
- Course materials such as time tables, lesson outlines and notes

The case studies are first solved by groups of students and then each student is encouraged to discuss the results as an individual. This method addresses some of the issues that have been raised in studies on technology-based discussions. *"Online interactions lack the non-verbal cues that are a component of face-to-face contact, and this may reduce the extent of communication that occurs"*(Curtis & Lawson 2001).

Engaging students in this process combines two key aspects of my teaching philosophies – collaborative learning and flexible delivery. Without the collaborative, face-to-face discussion, the students may miss out on some cognitive benefits that can be gained by the verbal exchange. In addition, students working together in this manner, away from the course tutor encourages autonomy, further assisting school leavers in their transition to the adult learning environment.

*"Clearly an important part of collaboration is the discussion that occurs during task engagement, since the cognitive benefits that are*

*claimed for collaborative learning (Pressley & Mc Cormick, 1995) must be mediated by the verbal exchanges among learners. Verjo (1996) emphasises this theme, basing collaborative learning on a "conversation or dialogue paradigm". Henri and Rigault (1996), in addition to the shared approach to tasks and student interdependence, also refer to greater student autonomy in distinguishing collaborative from cooperative learning"*

Curtis & Lawson (2001)

I am currently working on setting up a 'Feature Artist' block where successful international and local stylists can have galleries set up. A career outline for each stylist will be provided. Students will be given a number of weeks to view the information and post questions for the stylist. The stylist will log on at the end of the period and answer the students' questions. The purpose of this feature will be to make students aware of what is possible for their hairdressing career. They will have the opportunity to interact with people who started from humble beginnings to rise to great heights. Many trainees do not get an opportunity to hear these stories and such a high level of success seems out of reach. I hope to encourage learners to have big dreams, which should have a flow-on effect that expands the possibilities for their careers.



Certificate in Hairdressing  
Level 4 Students working  
online at The Learning  
Hub, Wintec 2008.

### **Interdisciplinary Collaborative Practice**

Treaty/Tiriti Based Collaborative Practice was a course I attended as part of my BASS degree. This inspired me to look at how we could work with other departments here at Wintec. From my first year at Wintec I encouraged and supported all hairdressing students in entering the local Waikato Regional Hairdressing competitions. This event provides an opportunity for students to build confidence and capability while showcasing their skills to potential employers. Each event is judged not only on the students' hairdressing skills, but their ability to build a total look for their models. The experience gives them an insight into the field of fashion styling, further increasing employment options. Designing a look for each model involves working with other creative professionals such as make-up artists. Students from Wintec's Beauty Therapy programmes were offered the opportunity to work with hairdressing students to produce the finished looks. The results were outstanding and are reflected in the outcomes of the annual hairdressing awards where our students always receive top places.

This authentic and collaborative learning opportunity evolved further in 2004 when the photography students who were studying towards the Bachelor of Media Arts degree were involved. There is a photographic section in the local hairdressing competitions. The photographers were invited to run a photo shoot for the hairdressing students using the Wintec studios. Now each year a long day is spent with hairdressing and beauty therapy students preparing models at the Wintec salon. The models are then taken to the Media Arts studios where photography and hairdressing students collaborate to achieve the finished look. Once again the results have been exceptional as the competition placing's reflect. The first photo shoot resulted in students' work being published in two trade magazines, and each year some of the photos are used in promotional material for our centre. This exposure builds student confidence across departments and gives all those involved exposure to industry and the public.

My experiences being out there and entering not only the regional comps but also photographic ones is also a really fun thing and a really good feeling. When you look at your work when photos have been taken. It's such an amazing feeling that you have achieved the work yourself. In the end I keep putting my achievements higher and higher every year for myself, because the competition gets harder.

Emma May, Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 2004 – Now a qualified stylist



Above: Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 student Emma May in the studio preparing her model.

Left: Emma's winning entry at the Waikato Regional Pre apprentice Hairdressing Awards 2004.

Make up: Katie Oliver (Wintec Beauty Therapy student), Photography: Sam Seath (Wintec Media Arts student),

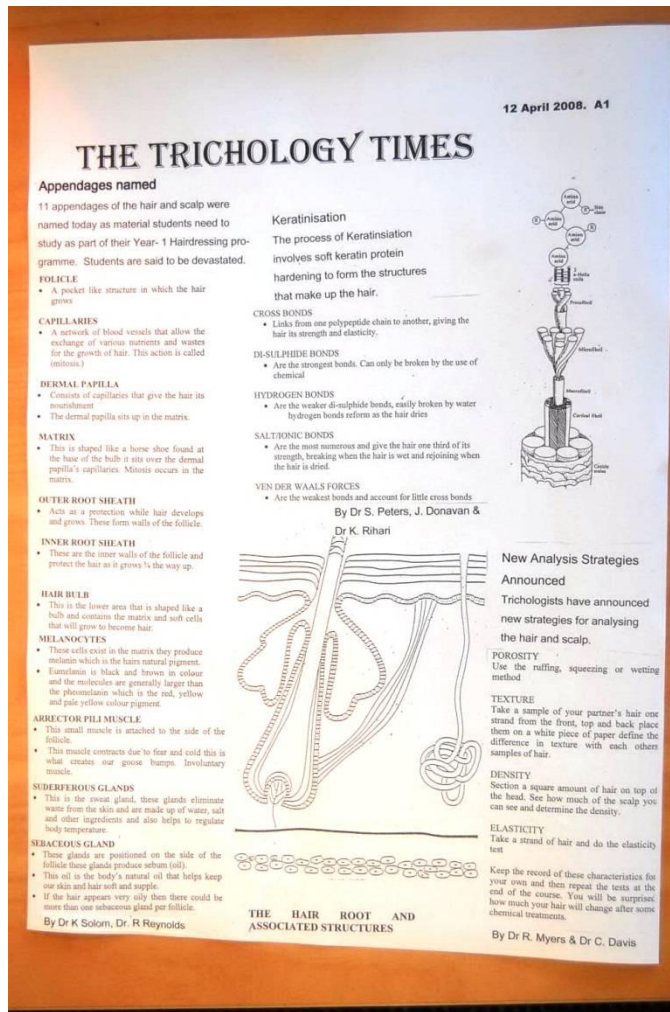
Another authentic learning opportunity for students was introduced in 2007. The Hospice Waikato Fundraiser was organised to help raise money for an excellent cause while providing students with clients for assessment opportunities and promote our centre. Students from the Certificate in Hairdressing Level 2 (Year 1) programme were invited to assist students from the Certificate in Hairdressing Level 4 (Year 2) programme as they offered ten-dollar haircuts to the public. The Year 1 students could be assessed and collect evidence on blow-dries while the Year 2 students did the same with

their haircuts. Students commented that the event provided a great opportunity to work on clients in a fast paced environment, work with students from other classes and that it gave them a sense of purpose to be helping those in need. Five hundred and sixty dollars was raised for the Hospice Waikato Building Appeal. I am hoping to make this an annual event and have discussed the possibility of involving the Beauty Therapy Department. They could provide services in a similar way. If this occurs we could at least double the money raised for Hospice while uniting students across departments in reaching a common goal. These goals, whether they are raising money for a good cause, designing images or managing the Wintec salon create what Fishbaugh (2002) describes as 'collaborative teams'.

*"A collaborative team has been described by Thousand and Villa (2000) as a group of people with a common goal and a shared belief system who work with parity and distributed functions in a collaborative teaming process. Such a team empowers members through shared ownership of problems and shared decision making of solutions".*  
(Fishbaugh, 2002)

### **Paper Production**

Using collaborative team-based learning in the classroom has been another useful teaching strategy. An example of this is the paper production project.



Delivering an in-depth theory subject to practically minded people can be a challenge. Breaking students into groups and asking them to research a topic ensures that they became actively involved in their learning.

During this project the students are told that they are doctors for the week. Resources are provided and I remain available at all

times to assist. A team of editors is appointed to put the paper together and I make myself sub-editor. In this role I can check for accuracy and ensure all the necessary content is included. Each student receives a copy of the finished paper. This becomes a valuable resource in addition to existing class materials.

An argument for using this method is that students become expert in one area of the subject only. To avoid this from occurring, the students are asked to swap articles. The groups then prepare presentations for the class based on this new topic. They are required to prepare at least one visual aid and a



handout for the class. This type student-centred learning encourages depth of understanding and helps avoid 'spoon-feeding' information to the students.

### **Review Teams**

Another example of collaborative team-based learning in the classroom is the review team strategy. This is used when a subject has been delivered and students' are preparing for assessment. This method can also be used as a type of formative assessment.



Students are broken into groups as they enter the room using a variety of methods. One example is for students' to choose an industry-related item as from a bag. Brushes will sit at one table, combs another. When they get to their tables they will see all the resources they will be using for the session. This creates a sense of excitement for the session.

Over the session the groups are required to complete a series of tasks. They may have to build the hairshaft using the materials provided, make the diagrams for the chemical action of straightening out of play dough or answer the envelop of questions. Marks are awarded for each tasks and token prizes are given at the end of the session to the winning team. This creates a fun, competitive environment where students are deepening their understanding through discussion, debate and active learning.

Other activities that could be included in these sessions include:

- Students write a set number of quiz questions for other groups. They are required to research the correct answers so they can accurately mark the completed test.
- Matching terms with their correct definitions. These can be cut outs or two columns that need to be matched.
- Fill in the missing words within statements or articles.
- Answers to questions can be placed in balloons. The questions are written on the balloons and students write the answers underneath. The groups are given a time limit to answer the questions and then pop the balloons to see if their answers are correct.
- Students' can make puzzles from diagrams. These can be given to other groups to be put together and labelled correctly.

There are endless possibilities for these activities and I am sure other teachers have some interesting ideas that they are already using.

## **Salon Teams**

Throughout my career a reoccurring theme of my teaching evaluations has been that of classroom management. Students' have even requested that I 'be meaner' in order to motivate and manage the class. This is a reflection of the general student groups that pass through our programmes. They are mostly new school leavers who often struggle to adjust to the adult learning environment. When teaching practical skills on a hairdressing course where students are required to be self-directed, this presents quite a challenge.

Over the years I have tried many various strategies to motivate students and encourage them to be self disciplined as opposed to seeking external discipline. The Salon Team Project has been the most successful to date. Students are broken into teams (salons). Throughout the year they work in these 'salons' during practical sessions. The students are encouraged to name their salons and develop their own policies and procedures. Regular meetings are held to review policy and performance. This gives students an insight into industry management and brings to light some of the decisions a management team may face.

The teams compete regularly for 'salon of the month'. The competition is based on:

- Client comments – these are collected in individual salon feedback boxes
- Successful operating polices and procedures

- Amount of services performed during the month
- Retail sales

This criterion strongly reflects industry values and helps students build the core generic competencies required for employment.

The process assists in developing a classroom environment that is more conducive to learning because of two key factors:

1. Receiving feedback directly from clients inspires students to provide the best possible service. They take ownership of the quality and output of their work. Students are often given a renewed sense of purpose when they realise just how great they can make people feel when they are using their new skills.
2. The power of peer pressure is channelled to create a professional class culture. Students can be fired from their salons. After receiving three warnings from their peers for being late, non-attendance or any form of professional misconduct they are instantly dismissed. They can apply to other salons in the class for employment, but just like in local industry, everyone knows why they were fired and job seeking is difficult.

Students have commented that they are more motivated to succeed and that they have become more professionally self-aware. I have found this project not only a support for students taking that important step towards becoming

adult learners, but it also creates a link between a simulated training situation and industry. Most importantly this strategy builds a truly authentic learning experience for students.













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