

Analyzing Teaching with the Purpose of Improving it

What is the pedagogical practice of Analyzing teaching with the purpose of improving it?

The end of the undergraduate career in no case represents the end of the training process of a professional, much less of a professor who must remain current in disciplinary, didactic and curricular terms.

The teaching practice should be a space for continuous improvement. The teacher must be constantly analyzing his or her practice and its consequences on student learning. Reflection can be individual or with the help of other colleagues, for which the teacher must maintain an open attitude and welcome well-intentioned criticism from peers and supervisors.

A teacher who seeks to improve himself/herself is attentive to his/her weaknesses and strengths, identifies his/her failures to avoid repeating them in the future, and his/her successes to reproduce them and share them with other teachers.

In practice, the analysis of teaching requires the teacher to record and examine his or her own classes, observe and comment on the classes of other colleagues and experts, and be part of study groups in which good practices are shared. In addition, the teacher must be constantly exploring advances in his or her disciplinary area, new teaching methodologies and new trends with respect to the student-teacher-content triad.

Only in spaces where there is trust among teachers and the conviction that all improvement is for the benefit of students can a culture of collaboration and mutual feedback emerge. In such an environment, teachers understand that the classroom doors are always open for observation and that respectful, specific and effective feedback adds value to what teachers do.

What it is not To analyze teaching with the purpose of improving it

- The analysis of teaching is not done in order for teachers to compete with each other. In a climate of continuous improvement, teachers should seek their growth and that of all their colleagues. It is not about looking better for having crushed others, undervaluing or criticizing their work. On the contrary, in an environment that fosters learning for all students, resources are shared, good ideas are discussed, effective methods are communicated, there is no fear of praising the good work of other colleagues, and there is no shame in asking for help.

- Opportunities for class observation and analysis should not be used to evaluate or punish teachers either; rather, they should be formative instances. In order for this to be a recurrent and appreciated practice, teachers should understand the observation instances as learning opportunities. The mode of analysis should be such that teachers voluntarily and actively seek opportunities to study their practices and do not run in terror at the possibility that their class will be recorded or that others will come to observe it.
- It is important that observation opportunities do not turn into group therapy sessions. It is not a matter of opening spaces for teachers to vent their frustrations or present their complaints to the management team, but of promoting an agile and practical discussion focused on improvement. This implies going from the identification of the problem to the design of concrete strategies based on their own experience and that of other teachers, and on scientific evidence.

Teaching strategies for analyzing teaching for the purpose of improving it

- ✓ Self-assess classes using a brief guideline that includes one or two short-term, addressable improvement strategies.
- ✓ Record your own lessons and review them individually and/or with a group of colleagues. During the analysis use rubrics that facilitate the identification of positive aspects and areas for improvement so that the conversation is not only about the negative (which is usually easier to identify).
- ✓ Organize teachers into collaborative pairs or trios and give them opportunities to observe each other while teaching and to provide feedback. Encourage teachers to visit other classrooms. Observing teachers can leave their observations, compliments, and suggestions in a designated mailbox. Plan a class together. Then, at random, one of the teachers executes the class and the others observe it. The focus of observation and the way to record evidence have been established beforehand. For example, one teacher might look at the types of questions asked during the class, another might look at the time students spend on each task, and another might study the evidence of deep learning that students show. After the class is over, teachers meet to discuss which aspects of the class are being effective, which could be improved, and how. In addition, they formulate questions to investigate and strategies to evaluate in the next class they design together.
- ✓ Make the more experienced teachers mentors to the novice teachers so that together they can analyze their classes. The novices will learn from the experience of the experienced teachers, while the experienced teachers will benefit from the freshness and enthusiasm of the novices' eyes.
- ✓ Identify common needs of a group of teachers (e.g., how to develop complex questions after reading) and develop a workshop to practice that skill, inviting an expert teacher to model strategies or analyzing videos of teachers based on observation focus.

- ✓ Partnering among schools serving similar students to share effective practices, either face-to-face or virtually.

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