

**Pastoral Pedagogy: A Great Composition Comprising the Song, the Singer, and the
Singing**

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Abstract

A great deal of the variance in student achievement, motivation, and engagement is explained at the student level. This poses a challenge to educators who typically educate at a group level. This article proposes *pastoral pedagogy* as a key means by which educators can facilitate an individual student's personal connection to teaching and learning in the group setting. The more an individual student can personally connect to the teaching and learning, the more motivated and engaged he or she is proposed to be. Pastoral pedagogy is comprised of three key dimensions: the substantive dimension (relating to the subject matter taught and assessed), the interpersonal dimension (relating to the teacher him or herself), and the pedagogical dimension (relating to the teaching practice). When the student is personally connected to all three dimensions, it is proposed he or she is in the strongest position to engage with the teaching and learning taking place. Hence, a great lesson is something like a great musical composition, comprising the song, the singer, and the singing.

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Introduction

Recent developments in statistical modeling (see Goldstein, 2003; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) have enabled researchers to more accurately estimate the relative contribution of student-, class-/teacher-, and school-level effects in achievement and motivation. Findings of such research (described below) indicate that a bulk of variance lies at the student level. That is, in much research there is greater variation from student to student than from class to class or school to school. This poses a challenge to educational practitioners in that pedagogy is primarily aimed at a group or class of students. The question, therefore, is how educators are able to teach in a group setting and yet tailor pedagogy in such a way that the individual is accounted for. It is suggested that the extent to which educators can do this will rely on the extent to which the individual student can connect in personally meaningful ways to all dimensions of teaching. It is suggested here that pastoral pedagogy is a vital means by which these important personal connections can take place.

Levels of Variance in Educational Outcomes

Over the past two decades there has been a great deal of research investigating student achievement, motivation, and engagement. Most of this research is conducted on the assumption that motivation is primarily a student-level construct and does not account for the fact that there is also variation at other levels such as at the class and school levels. Following from this, it is also assumed that educational intervention aimed at enhancing achievement and motivation should be directed solely at the individual student, without adequate recognition that there may well also exist a class and school motivational climate that needs to be addressed. If such climates exist, then intervention also needs to be

targeted at the class/teacher and whole-school level. It is therefore important to understand the extent to which achievement and motivation vary as a function of student, class, and school. The answer to this question holds substantial educational implications not only for more targeted intervention but also for system-level and school policy.

In terms of academic achievement, there is existing evidence that a good proportion of the variance is explained at the student and class levels. For example, Rowe and colleagues (Hill & Rowe, 1998; Rowe, 2000; Rowe & Rowe, 2002) have shown that the bulk of variance in student achievement is explained by student-, teacher-, and classroom-related factors. Indeed, in a major analysis of pedagogy, Lingard and Ladwig (2001) found that there were more differences in pedagogy between teachers than between schools (see also MacDonald, Saunders, & Benfield, 1999; Rowe, 2000). Qualitative work has supported similar conclusions (Martino & Meyenn, 2002).

In terms of motivation and engagement, there is also evidence that the bulk of variance is accounted for at the student level. Martin and Marsh (in press), for example, found that in three school subjects (English, mathematics, science) and across 16 measures of motivation and engagement in each subject, there was significant student-level variance. Specifically, of 48 tests (16 measures x 3 subjects) conducted of student-level variance, all yielded significant results. On six of the 16 measures in mathematics, there was significant class-level variance; this was the case for only one of the science measures and none of the English measures. Of the 48 tests of school-level variance, none were significant. It is clear, then, that students account for the bulk of variance in their motivation and engagement.

This suggests that student-level intervention is likely to yield the best results. However, the reality is that the bulk of education is delivered at the group level. This poses a significant challenge to educators and there is a need to identify pedagogical practice that

is able to target student-level variance. As suggested earlier, pastoral pedagogy is suggested as an important means to do this.

Pastoral Pedagogy

Here pastoral pedagogy is defined as pedagogy that connects to the individual student on three levels: the level of substance and subject matter, the interpersonal level, and the pedagogical level (see Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, for additional perspectives on pastoral pedagogy). Essentially, then, pastoral pedagogy comprises three key relationships: the substantive relationship (the connection between the student and the subject matter and substance of what is taught), the interpersonal relationship (the connection between the student and the teacher him or herself), and the pedagogical relationship (the connection between the student and the pedagogy/teaching).

It is therefore evident that a great lesson can be likened to a great musical composition, comprising the song (the substantive), the singer (the interpersonal) and the singing (the pedagogy). When the student connects in all three ways, there is a solid foundation for high quality engagement in the teaching and learning context. Essentially, then, it is proposed that pedagogy has the greatest capacity to enhance motivation, engagement, and achievement when the individual student personally connects to the substance and subject matter, the teacher, and the teaching. This proposed framework is presented in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The Substantive Relationship (the Song)

The first key connection is that between the student and the actual subject matter, the substance, and the nature of tasks conducted in the teaching and learning context. Martin

(2002, 2003, 2005) identified core elements of substance and subject matter that facilitate students' connection to the teaching and learning context. These include:

- Setting work that is challenging but not too difficult
- Assigning work that is important and significant
- Building variety into content and assessment tasks
- Assigning interesting work
- Drawing on material that is fun to learn
- Utilizing material and assigning tasks that arouse curiosity

It is suggested that these elements reflect content, subject matter, and learning tasks to which an individual student can meaningfully connect. These are an important means by which the student engages with the 'what' of the teaching and learning context.

The Interpersonal Relationship (the Singer)

The second key connection is that between the student and the teacher him or herself.

Martin (2002, 2003, 2005; see also Slade, 2001) has identified key characteristics of good interpersonal relationships in the teaching and learning context. These include:

- Actively listening to students' views
- Allowing student input into decisions that affect them
- Getting to know the students
- Showing no favoritism and affirming all students
- Accepting students' individuality

- Having positive but attainable expectations for students

It is suggested that these elements characterize high quality interpersonal relationships.

These are an important means by which the student engages with the ‘who’ of the teaching and learning context.

The Pedagogical Relationship (the Singer)

The third key connection is that between the student and the teaching or pedagogy itself.

Martin (2002, 2003, 2005) has articulated some key elements of effective pedagogy, including:

- Maximizing opportunities for students to succeed and develop competence
- Providing clear feedback to students focusing on how they can improve
- Explaining things clearly and carefully
- Injecting variety into teaching methods
- Encouraging students to learn from their mistakes
- Clearly demonstrating to students how schoolwork is relevant and/or meaningful
- Ensuring all students keep up with the work and allowing for opportunities to catch up

It is suggested that these elements characterize high quality pedagogy. These are an important means by which the student engages with the ‘how’ of the teaching and learning context.

Self-Audit of Pastoral Pedagogy

It is also possible for teachers to conduct a self-audit of the status of pastoral pedagogy in their own teaching practice. In Tables 1a to 1c are checklists of the key elements of each of the three parts of pastoral pedagogy. In each table, the teacher assesses whether a given element is a strength or a weakness. A tally of responses provides a quick indication of the nature of the pastoral pedagogy conducted by that teacher. It also provides a quick indication as to which (if any) of the three cornerstones of pastoral pedagogy reflects the teacher's strength and which (if any) of the three cornerstones are suggestive of the need for further development.

Conclusion

A central tenet of this discussion revolves around the central idea that teachers make a difference but are better able to do so when they deliver pedagogy in a way that enables the individual student to connect in personally meaningful ways to three key elements of that pedagogy: the substance of what is taught (the song), how it is taught (the singing), and who is doing the teaching (the singer). These, it is proposed are the three cornerstones of pastoral pedagogy – pedagogy that maximizes students' personal connections in the teaching and learning context. When students are more personally connected with the teaching and learning context, they are more engaged and motivated to work and achieve to their potential.

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Figure 1

Pastoral Pedagogy Framework

The extent to which pedagogy impacts on achievement, motivation, and engagement is a function of the student's personal CONNECTION to the:

- 1. Message/Content/Assessment (the Song)**
- 2. Teacher (the Singer)**
- 3. Teaching (the Singing)**

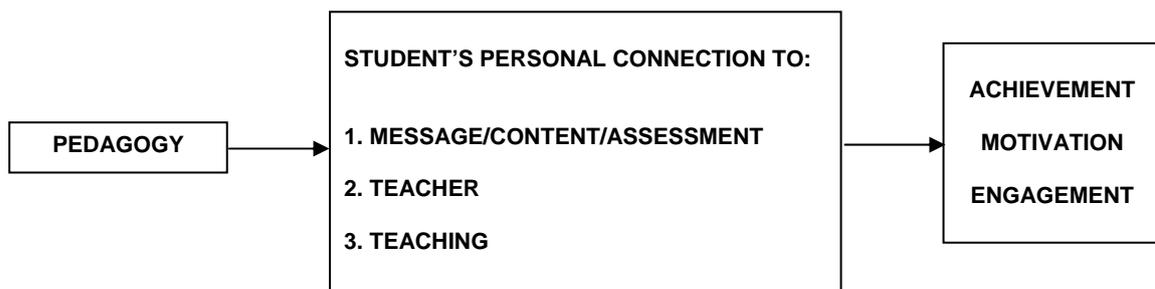


Table 1a

Students' Relationship with the Message/Content/Assessment ('the Song')

	STRENGTH "I do this well and it is a part of my regular practice"	NOT APPLICABLE/ RELEVANT/ IMPORTANT	WEAKNESS "I don't do this very much or very well"
	TICK ONE (✓)		
1. I set work that is challenging but not too difficult			
2. Where possible, I set work that is important and significant			
3. I inject variety into my teaching content			
4. I inject variety into my assessment tasks			
5. I provide students with interesting work			
6. I use broad and authentic (relevant and meaningful) assessment			
7. I try to ensure that my teaching content is not boring to young people			
8. In class and assigned work, I reduce monotony as much as possible			
9. Where possible I draw on material that is fun to learn			
10. Where possible I use material that arouses my students' curiosity			
TALLY			

Table 1b

Students' Relationship with the Teacher ('the Singer')

	STRENGTH "I do this well and it is a part of my regular practice"	NOT APPLICABLE/ RELEVANT/ IMPORTANT	WEAKNESS "I don't do this very much or very well"
	TICK ONE (✓)		
1. I make an effort to listen to my students' views			
2. A good teacher-student relationship is one of my priorities			
3. I give my students input into things & decisions that affect them			
4. I enjoy working with young people			
5. Where appropriate I try to have a sense of humor with my students			
6. I get to know my students			
7. I explain the reasons for rules that are made and enforced			
8. I show no favoritism			
9. I accept my students' individuality			
10. I have positive but attainable expectations for students			
TALLY			

Table 1c

Students' Relationship with the Teaching/Pedagogy ('the Singing')

	STRENGTH "I do this well and it is a part of my regular practice"	NOT APPLICABLE/ RELEVANT/ IMPORTANT	WEAKNESS "I don't do this very much or very well"
	TICK ONE (✓)		
1. I get students to do something well as much as possible and provide support needed to do this			
2. I have multiple indicators of success in schoolwork (marks, effort, group work, reaching goals, improve)			
3. I provide clear feedback to students focusing on how they can improve			
4. I make an effort to explain things clearly and carefully			
5. I inject variety into my teaching methods and reduce repetition or monotony			
6. I encourage my students to learn from their mistakes			
7. I aim for mastery by all students			
8. I show students how schoolwork is relevant and/or meaningful			
9. I make sure all students keep up with work and give opportunities to catch up or go over difficult work			
10. I don't rush my lessons or my explanations			
TALLY			