(Trans)gressing Faculty Development: Empowering Faculty to Support Trans* College Students through a Conceptual Model for Emancipatory Education

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Abstract

Because transgender and gender non-conforming students experience chilly climates, both inside and outside of the higher education classroom (Pryor, 2015; Nicolazzo, 2016), it is critical that faculty be educated about these topics (Duran & Nicolazzo, 2017). Previous research has shown that faculty often have little information on best practices that support and include transgender students in higher education. Faculty development, when planned and executed effectively, can provide educators with key information, insights, and pedagogical strategies to better support these students. This article discusses a practical model for faculty development to provide educators more information on how to support trans* identified students in their college classrooms.

Keywords: faculty development, trans*, transgender, resistance, curricular inclusion

I’ve had faculty say, you know, identity doesn’t matter in Math. But I’m still here. Still queer. It’s gonna always apply to me. It matters to me. It doesn’t matter the classes you teach, it matters the world you are in. You think the people that you interact with on a daily basis, you think everyone’s gonna be cis, white, straight. They aren’t. We aren’t. You need to learn about us to teach us. -- Reese, (they/them/their) junior in History

Introduction

We begin this piece with a quotation from a student that I (Jaekel) interviewed for a research project exploring how queer and trans* college students experienced their classroom environments within a higher education setting. Reese, a trans* identified student interviewed for the study, discussed their frustrations with faculty in the classroom, primarily with faculty who felt gender identity and sexual orientation had no place in the classroom, particularly within STEM courses. Nearly every day, students share with us comments such as these, and concerns of how

1. We use the term “trans*” denoted with the asterisks, as a means of being inclusive of the variety of gender identities that fall within the transgender umbrella. While we recognize that this is a contested term, we use it as a means of being inclusive of identities that transgress the gender binary. We discuss how we use this term further in the section, “Terminology Use.”
faculty misgender them, make hurtful remarks, as well as stories of being outed in the classroom as trans* and/or queer. As a faculty member who researches trans* and gender non-conforming students’ experiences in the college classroom (Jaekel), and as the Director of the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (Holmes), we work with queer and trans* students and hear these stories from students on a regular basis. Our students often share concerns of being misgendered, fear of having to navigate conversations around proper pronouns and names, and of not seeing their experiences reflected in course curriculum. We hear, first-hand, their frustrations of feeling invisible in and out of the classroom.

Because of our roles on campus, departments and units across campus often ask us to provide trainings and workshops to deliver information and inclusive strategies to help support queer and trans* students on our campus. In addition to providing LGBQ and Trans Ally trainings to the larger campus community through the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, the two of us together annually provide workshops for incoming faculty at the start of each academic year. Our goals of these trainings are twofold: first, to ensure that new faculty better understand that trans* students exist on this campus and have specific needs. Second, because of our first-hand knowledge from the stories we hear and the barriers our students often face, our other goal is to share information with faculty to ensure their classrooms are spaces where students can safely participate and learn.

The larger objective, however, is to provide a space that encourages emancipatory educational praxis. Faculty must be empowered to recognize that their classroom spaces can provide possibilities for trans* students, serve as points of access and inclusion, and offer educational spaces that can transform not just their classrooms and campuses, but larger social contexts. As such, we designed a practical model for faculty workshops that serves to better support the academic success of these students. Importantly, both this piece, as well as the model, focus upon trans* students specifically. We center trans* students intentionally as these students’ needs are not identical to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or queer (LGBQ) students. Moreover, literature discussing transgender and trans* students often conflate the experiences of trans* students with LGBQ students; this may serve to make trans* students’ experiences invisible (Catalano, 2015; Marine, 2011). Trans* students often face different obstacles within higher education than their cisgender peers such as being misgendered, navigating proper name use in the classroom, and access to gender inclusive facilities. Thus, we intentionally center trans* students and their specific experiences here.

This model can be an opportunity for faculty not only to learn more about how to support trans* students, but also to work with students to transform institutional and social structures. Below, we discuss barriers we faced in offering faculty workshops followed by a conceptual model we believe provides opportunity towards a classroom that engages in gender liberation. The framework focuses on three interconnecting contexts: social context, institutional environment, and emancipatory pedagogical strategies. We conclude this article discussing further recommendations to enhance faculty development.

Terminology Use

We take up the term “trans*,” marked with the asterisk, as an umbrella term meant to envelope a wide variety of individuals and as a way to acknowledge that “a wide amount of variance exists in how trans* people define their gender identity” (Duran & Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 527). We use trans* here as a means to serve both as a visual disruption linguistically, as well as to represent
that gender identities, “while seemingly expressing a solid identity, are sites of fractious, contested, and varied meanings” (Nicolazzo, 2016, p. 8). In this way, we wish to be as inclusive as possible of individuals who identify as transgender, trans, gender non-conforming, agender, and for all those who transgress the gender binary. We recognize that not all communities identify with the asterisk, however to better represent the students with which we work, we use this specific term as a means of inclusion. Notably, when literature discusses those who transgress the binary, we use the author’s term.

**Trans* Students in the Classroom**

While there is no longer a dearth of information about transgender, trans*, and gender non-binary college students in higher education (Stewart, 2016), trans* students continue to face chilly classroom climates (Pryor, 2015; Nicolazzo, 2016). Mirroring their larger campus climates, classrooms continue to be spaces where trans* students experience varying forms of discrimination (Garvey & Rankin, 2015), instances of misgendering (Pryor, 2015), and a lack of curricular inclusion (Garvey & Rankin, 2015; Pryor, 2015). Furthermore, scholars noted that faculty demonstrate limited competencies and knowledge about transgender topics, issues, and individuals (McKinney, 2005; Seelman et al., 2012; Seelman, 2014).

Literature recommends faculty should be both supportive and knowledgeable about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and trans* identities and topics and work to educate themselves about these topics (Duran & Nicolazzo, 2017; Green, 2010; Linley et al., 2016; Pryor, 2015), however faculty often have “little understanding of best practices working with transgender students” (Pryor, 2015, p. 452). Indeed, while literature has pointed out the importance of faculty’s role in supporting queer and transgender students’ success (Linley et al., 2016), trans* students’ classroom experiences have only recently garnered limited attention and scholarship (Duran & Nicolazzo, 2017).

In light of this recommendation, scholars suggest faculty engage in professional development and attend ally trainings to become better acquainted with strategies to help support and serve both LGBQ and trans* students (Linley et al., 2016). According to Linley et al (2016) professional development for faculty is a critical component of creating a more inclusive campus climate for students, as faculty support is key for academic success, as well as helping cultivate students’ sense of belonging on campus. The authors note that faculty can partner with campus resources, such as an LGBTQ Resource Center, and work to learn more about inclusive classroom strategies, such as asking for proper names, working to avoid heterosexist and binary teaching strategies (e.g., dividing students by gender for group work), and not outing students’ genders and/or sexualities.

While faculty development and ally trainings are an excellent start regarding how to begin to support trans* students, we found significant barriers in working to implement these workshops. Given the current models of many faculty development workshops and/or trainings, we contend that traditional models, or at least how some of these trainings often occur, are simply not enough and, in many ways, work to (re)inscribe a lack of inclusion in the classroom. Thus, here we propose a conceptual model for faculty development that goes beyond a “one and done” approach, but instead asks faculty to engage in dialogic learning, engagement, and critical thought about trans* students’ experiences in and out of the classroom.
Barriers in Faculty Development

Well planned and effectively executed faculty development can positively impact student learning (Condon, Iverson, Manduca, Rutz, & Willett, 2016). While faculty development can lead to better student learning and outcomes, there continue to be several barriers to faculty development making it difficult to gain faculty participation. Faculty are often “not sufficiently concerned and are reluctant or even resistant to improving their teaching and employing innovative strategies in their teaching” (Sabagh & Saroyan, 2014, p. 19). Much of faculty reluctance to participate in professional development is often due to issues of time and lack of incentive. Implementing new material and information and engaging in new techniques in teaching can be a time consuming and daunting task. For new faculty especially, pressure to produce research and to acclimate to the institution may be more pressing (Sabagh & Saroyan, 2014). This is especially true for new faculty and faculty who are not yet tenured. The amount of time it takes to participate in faculty development, and then the time revamping course curriculum and teaching methods may seem overwhelming for many tenure track faculty.

Further barriers exist around a lack of incentive for faculty to participate in professional development related to teaching. Incentives, which can range from encouragement for participation in teaching excellence as well as recognition and reward in the promotion and tenure process is critical (Sabagh & Saroyan, 2014). Depending on institutional type, college and/or university culture, and research level, some faculty may be getting messages from their institution that research and scholarship is what is most rewarded for promotion and tenure (Young, 2006). Thus, for faculty, it may not seem worth their time and attention if teaching is deemed less important. This creates barriers for participation in a time-consuming process that may or may not be deemed important by the larger institution.

Background and Context

For the past three years, we jointly presented at the beginning of the academic year for two different groups of educators. Our faculty development office offered two different institutes for teaching effectiveness: one for new, full-time faculty and then, a week later, one for graduate teaching assistants (TAs). Each of these sessions were one-day long institutes meant to orient new educators to topics like institutional policies about teaching, places on campus for faculty to find further resources, as well as strategies for effective instruction, such as how to utilize the various functions of the learning management system our institution uses.

At the first presentation, new faculty members (both tenure track and non-tenure track instructors) could attend a day-long institute; this was not a mandatory professional development opportunity, as newly hired faculty can choose to opt out of the workshop. Typically, each year 10-15 faculty members attended our presentation. The second presentation was for new TAs who had been admitted into a graduate program at the university and who had varying amounts of teaching responsibilities (some will be instructors of record, others will be graders for a faculty member). All TAs must attend the workshop and there were typically 40-50 TAs. For both presentations, our session on supporting queer and trans* students occurred between other sessions on learning management systems, institutional policy related to instruction, as well information about students requiring accommodations for disability.

Throughout these workshops, however, we experienced barriers to providing opportunities for these educators to engage in further learning about inclusive teaching strategies to support

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trans* college students. Each year, we were disappointed with our outcomes and noted the same patterns and issues: resistance to learning about trans* students, their needs, and strategies for inclusion of these students. Here, we define resistance as an act of dominance and power whereby individuals choose to disengage with the information and knowledges centering on minoritized identities. As Goodman (2015) stated:

[There is an] unwillingness to engage in critical self-reflection and to reevaluate currently held views. It is not simply having a different opinion, questioning, or ignorance, especially if there is a willingness and intent to learn. Resistance is rooted in fear and anxiety. (p. 63)

We also recognize that resistance is something that educators can expect when discussing systemic oppression. While we understand resistance may be vital to some learning, overarchingly, it has largely affected our ability to engage with participants. Below, we outline the resistance we have encountered, first from individuals and then from the institutional structure. We then discuss how the individual resistance we encounter in our workshop is largely mediated and influenced by the institution’s structuring of the day-long institute.

Individual Resistance

We note key patterns of participation on the part of both the full-time faculty as well as the TAs, although the patterns of resistance look different for each group. For the full-time faculty, they often only wanted the “right” answer, that is, specific actions they can take to “fix” an issue. While we have tried to explain that identities, contexts, and situations are complex and thus, we cannot give them a one-size-fits-all toolbox, they demonstrate a resistance to more nuanced approaches to supporting trans* students. We have had faculty actively disengage in the workshop because often our answers to questions was, “it depends.” While there are some steadfast rules in supporting specific student groups, in many instances, how to support trans* and queer students can be contextual. For instance, does the student wish to be out? Does the student wish to be acknowledged by a particular name and pronouns? Might the student want to be stealth? The answers to these questions influence how a faculty member should support a particular student.

Faculty in these trainings were also incredibly concerned with terminology, what was the “correct” terminology, and often object to some of the terminology we do provide. For instance, in the fulltime faculty training, we have had individuals struggle with our uses of the word “queer,” as they feel it was offensive. We have had faculty also ask why we were not using terminology such as “transsexual,” and significant resistance around our introductions of the importance of using pronouns and the names students wish to be called. Often, time was taken up by faculty who wish to debate the uses of terminologies, questions around what, exactly, constitutes a specific identity, how will they “know” if a student is a specific identity, and how can they approach and/or ask students who they may suspect as being a particular identity. While we begin our workshops with some basic terminology so that we have a shared language, often that was the only place faculty wish to engage.

The patterns of resistance for TAs looked different, although they too want to know what was exactly “right” when they were teaching students, not with terminology, but instead with processes of interacting with the students. While TAs rarely contest our uses of terminology, or even pronoun recognition, their resistance seemed rooted more in fear of how to engage with students:
what if they make a mistake? What if they offend the dominant group? How will they handle these situations in regard to classroom management? Is this something that they should even do? Will the institution support them if they ask for students’ pronouns? What will their supervising faculty think? Ultimately, TA resistance presented itself as not wanting to be wrong or make a mistake related to their employment, rather than care for the student.

In both groups, we also encounter resistance on the part of those who were uncertain as to why trans* students, in particular, needed “special” attention. Such resistance was illustrated when we are asked exactly how many and what the percentage of students on campus identify as trans*. We shared that currently, our institution does not track gender identity, nor does it track sexuality and thus, cannot give specific numbers. We would share that both of us work closely with a number of students who identify as queer and/or trans* and have first-hand knowledge on ways these students feel unsupported and/or invisible in the classroom. In many instances, those who want the specific numbers got frustrated with us because we could not give a specific percentage. While we communicated that we do not have specific percentages, faculty often struggle around the “anecdotal” nature of our data and, because it was not in an empirical journal article, were often skeptical of its accuracy.

We have also noted resistance not necessarily about learning about trans* students and strategies to support them in the classroom per se, but resistance around faculty status. That is, I (Holmes) actually sought Jaekel out to help with these workshops because I often felt faculty did not take me as seriously because I am a student affairs practitioner. While I have direct encounters with many queer and trans* students on campus, have knowledge of scenarios in which these students were either not supported and/or discriminated against, faculty seemed to take me less seriously. Because Jaekel is a faculty member, and a faculty member who researches queer and trans* students, we found we could mediate some of the resistance through Jaekel’s role as faculty.

Both the full-time faculty and TAs’ strategies for resistance mediate our ability to deliver information and engage in meaningful conversations around trans* students’ needs in the classroom. Whether participants recognized it or not, their insistence that we tell them the “right” answers and tell them “truth” about these topics subverted our ability to further engage in information about trans* students’ with them. Their disengagement and frustration when we could not give them the “right” answer prevents us from further engagement. Yet, we recognized that while these strategies of resistance have real implications for our trans* students in these faculty’s classrooms, their resistance was of little surprise.

While the literature discusses that learning and supporting trans* students is important and leads to further classroom engagement, few faculty are given any teaching and/or pedagogical training during their graduate studies (Sabagh & Saroyan, 2014). Thus, serving the needs of diverse students was likely a new notion to these faculty. Much of their resistance, particularly from the TAs, was rooted in fear. These faculty do not want to make mistakes and/or to admit that they may not know how to serve key student groups. They may already be overwhelmed and given that they only have a short time with us, where we can only provide overviews and cannot delve much deeper into the material, did not provide them any comfort for when they are on their own in the classroom. The resistance that we encountered in these workshops illustrated the effects of the larger messaging (something we discuss later) of what was important and what should “count” as important practice within teaching from the university.
Institutional Resistance

In addition to individual participant resistance towards these trainings, we noted resistance from an institutional structure for how these trainings take place, and how that structure served to reinforce individuals’ resistance. Institutional resistance came primarily from the frequency and the amount of time we were given to deliver this workshop. As previously mentioned, these day-long institutes on teaching occur only once an academic year. While both of us have contacted faculty development to request further workshops, to provide a more expansive training on inclusive pedagogical practices for trans* students, we have never been given the opportunity. To date, the faculty development office trainings center upon the learning management system and e-learning/distance learning sessions. In short, this workshop really was a “one-shot” model where participants got the information once with no follow up. Participants were told that they could enroll in the Ally Training program the institution offers, however there were no further campus trainings, workshops, or development offered around inclusive strategies for trans* students.

Additionally, we were only given 20 minutes for these trainings during the day long institute. While we both have met with administrators of both the faculty and the TA institutes, explain we simply need more time, our requests go unheeded. We have pointed out that sessions offered about the learning management system received far more time than we do. However, administrators continually contend there simply was not enough time for any session, let alone one on this topic.

Administrators have contended that the institution has come a long way in even offering this type of session. They have indicated that years ago, sessions only focused upon learning management systems, institutional policies, and day-to-day classroom operations such as taking attendance and grading. It has only been in the past three years that the institute has opened up workshop sessions for supporting specific student groups. Few individuals we have talked with recognize the message sent to faculty about how unimportant these sessions are because we are only given a short amount of time to present.

A final component of institutional resistance that we have encountered was that the institution does not require participation for the full-time faculty, nor do they incentivize it, or hold any accountability measures for attending it. While TAs were required to attend, full-time instructors and tenure track faculty could opt out. As such, the larger message sent from the institution was that for full-time faculty, inclusion was less important for them than it was for new TAs. The justification given was that full-time faculty typically have a terminal degree and have likely had exposure to teaching different types of students before. However, we continue to be concerned about the larger message that professional development regarding teaching and learning is optional.

As we reflected on these workshops each year, we understood why the individuals engage in these specific patterns of resistance; they are symptoms of the institution’s resistance. To be sure, these workshops were not designed to be anything more than a short, transactional lecture where we delivered terminology and what is essentially “trans 101” (Green, 2010). Because the institution limits the time we got to engage with participants, because it only occurred once in an academic year, and because these educators recognized that there was a population of students who are underserved on campus, they want the information as quickly and as effectively as possible. In essence, there was not time for nuance, critical thought, or attention to specific things like teaching methods and/or pedagogy. Participants saw the schedule and how much time we were allotted to talk with them during the day. From this, they knew they had a very short amount of
time to get as much information as possible. Because the institution only provided us 20 minutes, the larger message of the topic, its importance, and how long it would take to learn and implement these strategies deemed this unimportant. The idea of including trans* students became an add-on, tertiary topic for these educators.

Moreover, we understand why the TAs in particular experience fear. These were graduate students who, more times than not, had little to no education on how to educate students. They were contingent faculty, with very little power, and would be evaluated by specific faculty and departments, not necessarily by the institution. As such, their fear of making mistakes, of not being supported by their faculty and departments, mediated their practices. They were looking to us to provide some sort of information, truth, and comfort in a space where we simply could not.

Towards an Emancipatory Praxis

While it would be easy for us to assume that simply having more time would lead to more success in these workshops, the solution is more than just time. Rather, there must be a comprehensive approach to faculty development that provides a more holistic view of trans* students’ experiences. We hold here that it is critical faculty have the opportunity to examine the macro and microclimates trans* students traverse, as well as to provide opportunity to engage in a pedagogy that centers emancipatory practices. It is critical to move beyond terminology and transactional information about trans* students, and instead, empower both full-time faculty and TAs to transform their classrooms into spaces for gender liberation. Faculty relationships play an important role in student success, and while faculty may not recognize it, their classroom spaces can be powerful sites for transformation (Vaccaro, Dooley, & Adams, 2019).

As such, we created a model (see Figure 1 below) that works to not merely educate faculty, but to invite them into the conversation of how to support trans* students. To achieve this, the model begins by first discussing the larger social context and climate for trans* individuals, followed by exploring specific institutional environments for trans* identified students. After exploring these contexts, this model moves to discussing how faculty’s pedagogy, through a framework of emancipatory education, can support trans* students in the classroom. We envision that each component of this model informs the next, thus recognizing the ways in which social contexts directly inform our institutional environments and how institutional environments directly impact specific classrooms. Yet, for us, we share that through faculty members’ pedagogy, transformation can occur and can thus inform the larger social context. In this way, our aim is to empower faculty to use their classrooms as spaces to fracture oppressive systems of inequities.

We do not see this model as being prescriptive. Rather, we see this model as a framework to engage in faculty development towards emancipatory praxis within their individual campuses. As such, we provide here key reflective questions, rather than prescriptive truths, to encourage critical thought.
The Social Context

It is first critical to explore with participants in faculty development workshops the larger social context in which we live. Certainly, the current national climate for trans* individuals mediates our students’ lives. For instance, the recent legislation on banning transgender individuals from the U.S. military unless they serve as their sex assigned at birth (Philipps, 2019), various states’ billings banning trans* identified individuals to use restrooms according to their gender identity, and seemingly endless threats that the current administration will undermine any rights afforded to trans* bodies (Levenson, 2018) affect many trans* individuals. There is a national epidemic with the violence and murders of trans* women of color, in particular (Martinez & Law, 2019). As such, it is likely that these larger social contexts influence and mediate students’ experiences and individuals’ knowledge around trans* individuals.

Simultaneously, there have also been gains for trans* rights and certainly an increase in trans* visibility. In 2017, nine transgender individuals were elected to political office (Sopelsa, 2017), there is a growing representation of transgender characters in the media, and the larger discourse around transgender rights is more present than ever before (Faye, 2018). It is critical to know about the larger social context in order to make sense of how these larger laws and discourses affect institutions and students.

The Institutional Environment

The next area discussed is the specific institutional environment. Because the larger social context influences institutional policies, and because so much of trans* students’ experience is mediated by how institutions enact (or do not enact) policies to support them, it is key to discuss the institutional context and campus climate. In order for faculty to better understand how the institution values, supports, and provides resources, it is important to discuss institutional non-discrimination policies, access to healthcare, housing, and basic facilities, such as restrooms. Because each institutional context is different, we offer key questions to better inform discussions with faculty at their individual institutions:

- How does the institution recognize gender identity within their policies?
- How do learning management systems use (or not use) trans* students’ proper names?
● What does on-and-off campus housing look like for trans* students?
● What offices exist that can help support trans* students and how can faculty contact these offices for further support?

Engaging with faculty about the institution’s policies and resources provides them with opportunity to recognize how trans* students navigate campus. Additionally, this provides opportunities for faculty to become better acquainted with campus resources and offices that serve to support trans* students.

Pedagogy: Emancipatory Education

The final section of the model centers on the faculty member’s pedagogy. Here, we use emancipatory education as a philosophical framework to guide how an educator designs their course curriculum, course policies, and teaching methods, as well as how they interact with students. Emancipatory education is an approach to teaching and learning that “involves a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationships in classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state” (Nouri & Mahdi Sajjadi, 2014, p. 78). Emancipatory education, which emerges from critical theory, posits that the institutions and the act of education is not neutral. Rather, the processes of education, textbooks, and curriculum material, and how those materials are delivered are power-laden (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011).

Materials in curriculum and how that curriculum is delivered sends messages to students regarding what constitutes knowledge, what counts as “facts,” and what information is important enough to learn about (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). These decisions are made primarily by faculty, or individuals who are in a position of authority to assign grades and to choose what will and will not be discussed and covered in a class. As such, when trans* topics, identities, and/or experiences are not included within curriculum, either through formal curriculum or through inclusive teaching strategies, it sends the message to students that those topics are unimportant. For example, if a faculty member does not acknowledge a trans* student’s proper name, or continually misgenders a student, it illustrates to students that they are unimportant in the classroom space.

Emancipatory education holds that knowledge production occurs when educators and learners engage in relationships that eschew traditional notions of information delivery, such as the “banking model” (Freire, 1970), where faculty are the primary sites of knowledge. Instead, educators and students should work together to co-construct knowledge, allow students to help guide curriculum and educational initiatives, and engage in dialogic inquiry with educators. Because social policy informs institutions, and institutional policy informs education, emancipatory education believes that classrooms and other educational spaces should engage in positive social and political reform and work to engage in problem-posing in educational systems (Nouri & Mahdi Sajjadi, 2014). Emancipatory education also works to uncover the hidden curriculum, or how educational systems and spaces center certain knowledges and values as “forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideologies and social practices” (McLaren, 2016, p. 51).

While educators who choose curriculum materials may not recognize that their curriculum serves to privilege particular dominant identities, the covert nature of only including dominant identities, such as white and cisgender individuals, serves to provide messages that those identities and
knowledges are the “correct” ones. Thus, attention to what is included and what is excluded within curriculum provides opportunity to invite other perspectives into the class.

Emancipatory education can be actualized through how faculty engage with their students, design their curriculum, and engage in teaching methods. In the sections below, we provide an overview of how we understand each subsection and then offer key questions as a way to begin to empower faculty to design their curriculum and classrooms as sites for further participation with students.

Curriculum.

Here, curriculum refers to everything from readings and textbooks, to assignments, assessments, and discussions that occur in the classroom, as well as institutional and faculty policies. Essentially, what are the materials provided, and how are students asked to engage with them, and what are the policies in place that mediate student experiences? Key questions that can be asked around inclusion in curriculum can be:

- In what ways does the curriculum (readings, textbooks, discussions, assignments) include and/or exclude trans* bodies?
- What identities are included and excluded in the course materials?
- How can trans* bodies be included and represented in the curriculum in ways that go beyond a mere add-on, and instead further student learning?
- How do institutions’ and faculty policies influence the curriculum?

While we recognize that some courses may not have opportunities for inclusion of trans* bodies in textbooks and/or class readings, these questions around curriculum are key ones to have. Paramount to emancipatory education is attention to both the overt curriculum, as well as the hidden curriculum.

Importantly, however, we have found that regardless of the course discipline, things like policy largely mediate the curriculum for trans* students. For instance, we have worked with several faculty who have a strict tardy policy that penalizes students for being five minutes late. We have had to explain, however, that because our campus does not have gender inclusive restrooms in all the buildings, our trans* students struggle to use the restroom and get to their class across campus in enough time. Thus, while this policy is meant to have students in class on time to maximize learning, it also unfairly punishes trans* students who do not have equitable access to restrooms.

Teaching Methods.

While curriculum inclusion may prove difficult for some disciplines, certainly inclusion in teaching methods transgresses disciplines. Regardless of the class, its content, and the material covered, key to inclusion are teaching methods, or how faculty engage with students in their classrooms. Teaching methods can be how information is delivered (i.e., lecturer, small group), how students are allowed and/or not allowed to participate, how and what information is covered, and how educators provide space for inclusion through classroom activities, discussions, and/or facilitation. Some questions around inclusive teaching methods may include:
● What are ways you can provide opportunity for students to indicate their names and/or pronouns they wish to use in a way that is safe and effective?

● How can you work to include voices of trans* students in the classroom?

● What are ideas for how to group students rather than basing it on gender?

From these questions, faculty can think through ideas for teaching methods that are more inclusive and provide opportunity for trans* student participation. In particular, we have worked with faculty who have used gender as a way to either group students and/or to split the class up for discussion. Rather than using gender as a way to group students, students can choose their own groups, be assigned groups based on their viewpoint of the material, or simply grouped randomly.

**Classroom Management.**

Classroom management can be daunting, especially because issues can happen quickly, and at times, the faculty member may not even be aware of what exactly occurred. To help alleviate anxiety, we recommend having clearly outlined expectations and policies of what classroom policies are and how issues will be handled in the event they arise. For example, faculty should include a section in their syllabus that outlines the institution’s non-discrimination policy, and a statement that reiterates that the classroom is a space where discrimination will not be tolerated. It is important to note, however, that merely including a policy in a syllabus does not protect students against discrimination. It is key that faculty work to enact the policy statements they include. Other ideas may include brainstorming with students their expectations for behavior and participation through things like “ground rules,” and/or discussions with students about how they would like to see instances handled.

Questions that may help facilitate thinking through classroom management are:

● What are the behavioral expectations for students in this class?

● What are effective ways students can critique and/or disagree in a productive manner?

● How will instances of discrimination be handled, both on the part of students and the faculty?

● If a mistake is made, how can we engage in recovery and transform it into a learning moment?

It is important for faculty to include themselves, their own actions, and their own behavior when issues of classroom management are discussed. These expectations and classroom management strategies should be for both faculty as well as students. Importantly, both students and faculty make mistakes and, more times than not, mistakes can be sites for further learning. Thus, it may be helpful when discussing classroom expectations that expectations around acknowledging mistakes and ways to move forward be addressed, as well. This may feel high stakes for TAs or other faculty who are new to teaching; thus, it is important that TAs, in particular, are given opportunities to develop strategies for mistake recovery that feel comfortable for them but also attends to owning their mistakes.
**Recommendations**

Importantly, this model can only work if institutions work to provide both the space, resources, and time for such a comprehensive workshop for faculty. As we reflect upon the resistance we have encountered in the workshops we have facilitated, we understand participants’ frustrations, fears, and anxiety about being “right” and using “correct” terminology. In a single day, participants were exposed to so much information, tasked with learning about the institution, their new students, all while knowing they need to be preparing for their classes, writing syllabi, and selecting course materials. Thus, in order to actualize this conceptual model that serves to empower faculty to better support their trans* students in the classroom, we provide recommendations that must occur if true transformation and learning can occur regarding trans* college students.

**Increased Time with Faculty for Engagement**

For faculty to be able to really explore the larger social and institutional contexts for trans* bodies, there must be more time allotted for these workshops. Ideally, these workshops can take place over a number of days throughout the semester. This provides continued engagement, time for reflection, as well as allows for participants to do their own research and come with their specific questions. Our concern is that not even day-long institutes are enough; instead, these sessions should occur throughout the academic year.

**Increased Partnerships with Campus Offices**

While we are able to provide an excellent foundation for how to support trans* students, we also believe that there are other campus offices that faculty can benefit from. To be sure, we are often uncomfortable being deemed the sole “experts” of trans* students on our campus. There are a variety of other offices, and possibly even student groups, that faculty can engage and benefit. Importantly, if students participate in these workshops, workshop facilitators must pay careful attention to issues of emotional labor and to ensure that student voices are not merely used. As such, students should be appropriately compensated and be able to opt out of discussions if they choose.

**Reward Structures**

Our final recommendation centers on the reward structures of these professional development workshops. Primarily, institutions need to reward participants for the time and hard work that goes into teaching improvement and effectiveness. Not only should institutions provide the built-in time for faculty to engage in faculty development for teaching, these workshops should reward faculty’s participation in the promotion and tenure process. While ideally teaching effectiveness and engaging in inclusion in the classroom should be a value all faculty have, as outlined by Sabagh and Saroyan (2014), faculty are given messages by institutions and other faculty members regarding what “counts” for promotion. Thus, to ensure that faculty know that inclusive, effective teaching is valued at an institution, it must be rewarded on a structural level.
Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to provide a practical conceptual model that can be used in faculty development so that classrooms can be sites for emancipatory praxis. For faculty to be empowered in their classrooms, it is critical that institutions design effective faculty development opportunities for faculty to better foster inclusive teaching practices. Faculty need more time to learn about topics, develop methods of instruction, and find curricula that include diverse student groups. Importantly, institutions need to send the message that effective teaching, which must include inclusive teaching practices, matters. This is particularly important for trans* students who experience chilly campus climates and classroom environments.

References


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