



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WINNIPEG

English
Language Program

Curriculum Drift:

Re-attuning an Academic Writing Course to its Objectives

Languages Canada Conference

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February 25, 2019

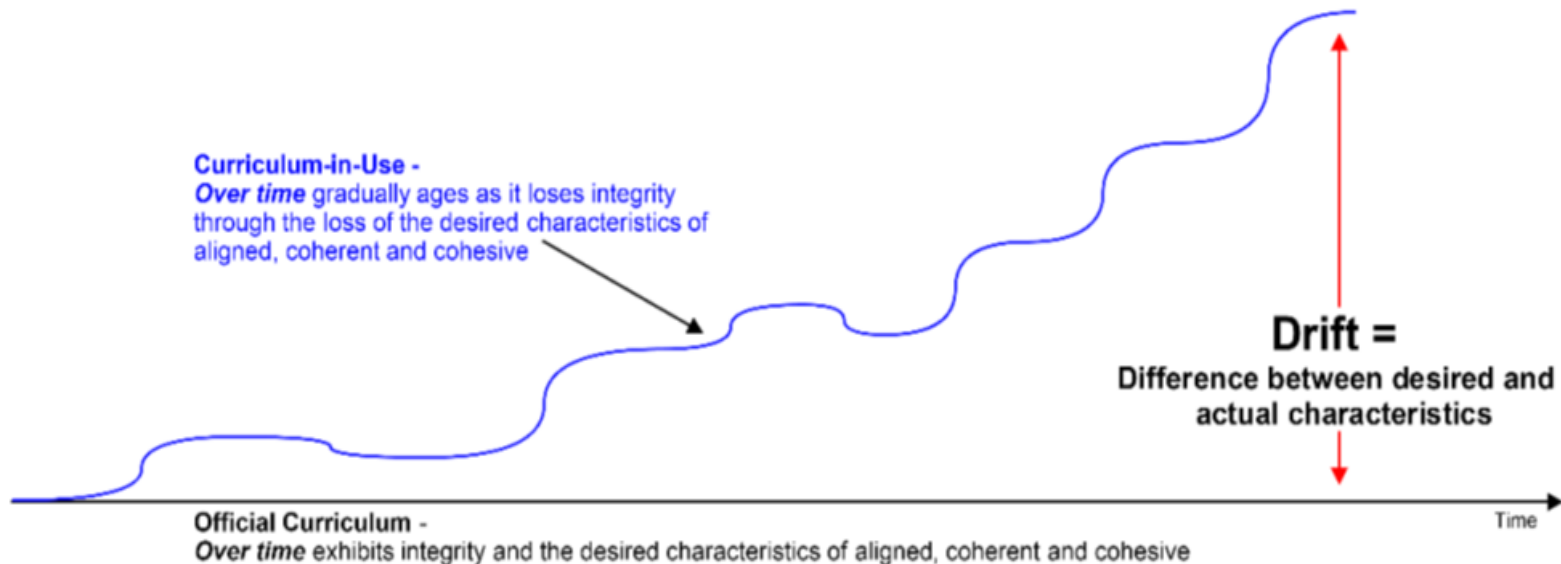
DISCOVER · ACHIEVE · BELONG



What is curriculum drift?

“Curriculum drift is defined here as a process whereby the learning experiences associated with a curriculum do not match the specific syllabus, vision, or intentions associated with attaining desired outcomes...”

Woods, A. (2015 Nov) J Nurs Education 54(11), p. 641-4



Dr Lynette Johns-Boast, SFHEA
Australasian Council of Deans of ICT
ALTA Forum, Adelaide, 2017



Why do curriculums drift?

- Instructors base their teaching on outcomes they believe to be important
- Instructors utilize their content knowledge base to meet outcomes
- Instructors teaching content and style comes from their own learning experiences
- Student levels can contribute
- Perception of student needs can encourage instructors to meet the needs at the expense of set outcomes
- The desire to keep students happy and successful



Why does curriculum drift matter?

- Focus on “felt” rather than “ascribed” needs; a “good” program responds to both.
- Can de-professionalize a course or program (“I’ll teach what I know”).
- Can send mixed or unclear messages to agents, instructors students and other stakeholders.
- Can frustrate students who move through the program (“Why are we learning this again?”).
- May cause difficulty from program development perspective (How can you develop new courses if you don’t know what is being taught in current ones?)
- Impacts institutional expectations (senate approved courses/pathways programs)



Background Information

- Full-time English Program for international students
- Pathway to university – Academic 3, 4 and 5
- Academic 5 meets the English Language Requirement for undergraduate programs



What drifted?

- Program goals - ELP academic pathway to success to UW Degree Studies and Continuing Education Programs
- Course outcomes - “independently formulate a research paper”



Drift resulted in...

- Undefined and unclear program goals
- Overlap of outcomes between A3, A4 and A5
- Overlap of various objectives between A3, A4 and A5
- Overlap of assessment types (i.e. research paper)
- Limited scaffolding between courses – A3, A4, A5



Other Areas of Focus during Review

Assessment/Evaluation:

- Were not described in previous curriculum framework
- Were all summative in practice - focus on product, not process
- Included limited/no focus on peer review
- Included limited self-assessment and reflection



Areas of Focus Con't

- Realignment and reorganization of objectives
- Some teaching methods needed to be re-aligned with best teaching practices (lecture, teacher-centred etc.).



Curriculum Review Approach

Re-evaluated program goals and outcomes by:

- Conducting research to better ascribe student needs – Undergraduate and Continuing Education
- Gathering informal feedback from ELP instructors
- Revisiting and re-evaluating student course evaluation data
- Gathering informal student and instructor feedback

*From this, we formulated “Big Ideas” for academic stream course development



Approach Con't

- Reaffirmed program goals
- Began with A5 course review and worked backwards
- Made slight revisions to A5 outcomes (senate approved)
- Reorganized, revised and integrated relevant course objectives from collective experience and best resources



Approach Con't

- Redesigned curriculum framework (amalgamation and recreation)
- Re-evaluated and reinvented assessment scheme:
 - inclusion of writing portfolio
 - grades for process, not only product
 - alignment of reading and writing assessments



Approach Con't

- Integrated “Suggested Themes”
- Eliminated “one” textbook approach in favor of “picking and pulling” best resources
- Included “Suggested Resource” section
- Developed flexible assignment descriptions for each written, summative assessment in collaboration with instructors

*Framework example



Next Steps

- Build stronger connection to Undergraduate and Continuing Education
- Develop exemplars to guide teaching and assessment practices
- Analyze and adjust student workload demands
- Develop learner profiles that describe students' language proficiency/abilities



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Best Practices



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Good Writing...

- is focused
- has a purpose
- convinces the reader of your position
- moves from the general to the specific
- is connected
- connects to its audience
- is recursive
- needs to be edited



Building a Community...

- Students should interact with each other at every stage of the writing process.
- Students need to feel safe so that they can edit more effectively.
- Students should see value in being a part of the community.



Choice and Control...

- Process Writing
 - Drafting
 - Editing
 - Portfolios
- Editing
 - Peer Conferences
 - Written Response
 - Writing Workshops



Process Writing

- Students work through a number of drafts.
- Students need to work on reducing self-censorship.
- Students work together to make better papers.
- Allows students to improve the quality of their writing and their content knowledge.
- Students gain knowledge of how an audience reacts to their writing.
- Students are marked on both the end product and the process.



Benefits of Peer Tutoring

- Crucial aspect of process writing
 - Can increase revision
- Adds collaboration to your class
- Makes writer aware of ‘audience’
- Adds other skills to your writing class
- Advice is more ‘student level’
- Writers become more conscious of their ability to control the text



Peer Tutoring Conferences...

- Develop the peer/writer relationship allowing writers to better understand the importance of writing for their audience.
- Allow writers understand the ideas of choice and control in their writing.
- Students need explicit instruction in peer editing process
- There is a great need to include reflection on editing into a writing class.



Editing in Action

Peer

- Suggest new words
- Suggest changes to sentence structure
- Asks questions
- Make reader statements
- Find the good points
- Encourage the writer and the changes

Writer

- Listen as objectively as possible
- Explain what they meant to say
- Interact with the suggestions
- See the gaps between text and audience



Better Writers not Better Writing

Peer Tutors and Writing Conferences should concentrate on...

Higher Order Concerns

Main ideas, supports, details, transitions, sentence structure, word choice, engagement, structure, and anything that make the text better as a whole

Not Lower Order Concerns

Grammar, spelling, punctuation....and other surface level components of writing.



Portfolios

“We do not learn so much from experience as we do from reflecting on our experience.”

– John Dewey



Portfolios

Hyland (2003) defines portfolios as “multiple writing samples written over time, and purposely selected from various genres to best represent a student’s abilities, progress and most successful texts.”



Benefits

- Self-Evaluation/Reflection
 - Through comments from peers and teachers
 - Editing Journals
 - Ongoing development
- Creates a different connection between teacher and student
 - Teacher as audience or as part of the writing community



Benefits

- Encourages ongoing communication within the class
- Assessment benefits
 - Fits in with process theory
 - More constructive Feedback
 - Writers more in control
 - Authentic



Possible Portfolio Artifacts

- Drafts
 - Self, Peer and Teacher Edits
- Editing Journal Entries
- Editing Advice Given
- Best Advice Taken
- Most Improvement
- Best Essay/Piece of Writing



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Implementation



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Positioning Myself

- Joined as an Academic 5 instructor before the implementation of the new curriculum framework.
- Process of understanding the curriculum and questioning what ought to be changed and how.
- Collaboration with other instructors/stakeholders: Working from shared understanding/common goal.



Instructors

- How do we get instructors to “buy in” to the new curriculum?
- Moving from receptiveness to active involvement.
- Instructors as active “sensemakers” in the implementation process – happening with instructors, not to instructors (Weick, 1995; Bradford & Braaten, 2018).



Students

- Making students aware of purpose of outcomes and curriculum elements.
- Changing the way writing is 'done': developing “writer identities”
- Transformations in the “academic culture” of the classroom/program.



What feedback would you give on this paragraph?

In fact, the ways of learning English are depended on your home country, so in different countries, English is being learnt in different ways because in some countries, especially Canada, English is it official language, while some countries do not consider English as an official language, such as Vietnam. Although the way English is taught in Canada and in my home country, Vietnam, is similar, the knowledges which you get in two countries are really different.



My Experience – Giving Feedback

- Before: focusing on everything and nothing.
- Reimagining feedback as ongoing conversation.
- Learning to prioritize and focus when giving feedback.



Animal experiments are referring to use animals for scientific research in laboratories in order to acquire the new knowledge about biology and medicine. With the development of animal testing, animals themselves have become an integral part of medical achievements, hence numerous ethical issues have been occurred and disputed. While some argue that it is not morally correct and harmful to apply unverified drugs or treatments on people without experimentation in animals; therefore, animals deserve to make sacrifices of scientific accomplishments because of their short spans of lives. Others point out animal testing is inhumane and not required since experimental results are mostly unsatisfactory and ineffective, and the costly animal experiments are failed to predict the influence appearing in human, sometimes these effects lead to large

Commented [T1]: Verb tense.

Commented [T2]: GP - gerund

Commented [T3]: Run-on; change punctuation.

Commented [T4]: GP – passive voice

Commented [T5]: Not harmful?

Commented [T6]: GP - preposition

Commented [T7]: Fragment – dependent clause (“While”)

Commented [T8]: WW – “deserve” means it is a reward.

Commented [T9]: GP – preposition

Commented [T10]: WW - lifespans

Commented [T11]: GP – passive voice



needs improvement unsatisfactory

Content

Introduction

- Do you have an interesting hook for your introduction?
- Is your thesis strong? (specific, answers topic question, show focus for essay)

Body

- Do your three body paragraphs have unique and separate ideas? Do they connect back to the thesis?
- Do you use evidence and examples to support your ideas?

Conclusion

- Is your conclusion strong? (restates your thesis, gives opinion/suggestion/prediction)

Superior

Satisfactory

Needs Improvement

Unsatisfactory

Organization

- I think your thesis is doing a good job of hinting at the idea of changing people's perceptions, but I'm not always clear on how your three ideas connect back to it. You may want to consider including them somehow in the thesis or adding a "roadmap" sentence.
- Make sure to paraphrase/quote and cite sources for information taken from the Internet (see comments in draft).
- I'm not quite clear on how the final part of your second body paragraph (gendered language) connects to the main idea of this paragraph (intonation/stress).



consider English as an official language, such as Vietnam. Although the way English is taught in

Canada and in my home country, Vietnam, is similar, the knowledges which you get in two countries are really different.

Having chance to study abroad in Canada made me to realize just like in Canada, teachers in my country really care about grammar and vocabulary which in order to help student know how to use English correctly. Most of Vietnamese student, they have a firm foundation about grammar and vocabulary. Since grammar and vocabulary are important parts of English, so without them, it is hardly to acquiring English. In short, no matter what country you are in, study English means you have to acquire grammar and vocabulary.

In spite of the similarity of learning grammar and vocabulary, which are focused in both countries, the knowledges you get are different. To begin with, while in Canada, learning English means you will be taught not only English, which is in the text book, but also about soft and hard skills, in Vietnam, the knowledges you get are mostly inside books and there is no

Commented [EK2]: Good job trying to add more background information - but I wonder why it being an official language or not would change the way that it is taught – perhaps consider adding a little more information about that.

Commented [EK3]: Thesis shows focus well – similar in method (ways of teaching), but different in knowledge.

While this is very focused, it might be a good idea to explain a little more in the background information about what you mean by *ways* and by *knowledge* so that it is clear to the reader.

Commented [EK4]: This paragraph shows a clear similarity, but I'm still confused as to how grammar/vocabulary is “ways” and not knowledge, as it seems to me that it is “something” that you learn, not a particular way of learning it. For example, both could learn grammar, but in completely different ways – eg. by games or by reading books.

Consider adding some information about the methods (ways) by which they are learned are similar.



Lessons Learned

- Instructor response and involvement - curriculum review process and rationale document
- Curriculum review timeline – Major and minor review schedule
- Stronger connection to stakeholder needs – students, undergraduate and continuing education programs