Professor, give some knowledge; I do not have time to think
College Expectations: Knowledge and/or Requirements?

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Abstract

Today in our universities, hundreds of students expect to be spoon-fed with “junk” knowledge, knowledge that is digested without cultural references. Learning involves a metamorphic process by which the individual engages in an internal cognitive dialogue with their own personal beliefs and their interpretation of the information. Yet, strategic actions (Habermas, 1979) among higher education faculty limits the reflective learning process. Within the ‘aula’ of universities there are only two goals: faculty want to have full control of the learning process and ‘universitarios’ want to have success as the only guideline of their educational experience. We argue that good pedagogical practices foster democratic principles that help college students understand that knowledge provides rights as well as responsibilities. Students have the right to receive an education that will nurture their human development. The latter is avoided when faculty utilize Banking models (Freire, 1970) which in turn cultivate passive learners in search of “junk” knowledge. The new generation of “junkies” has become ‘aficionados’ of these practices. Consequently, they befall into an educational parallel where they seek to be instructed rather than educated. We, as transformative educators believe that success is measured by students becoming agents of social
This new generation “J” of students is neither educated with comprehensive learning processes nor with a humanistic educational flow that allows them to discover the benefits of scholarly practices as well as to grow as active citizens doted with critical thinking. We define a comprehensive learning process as one where both professors and students interact forming a dialectical (Hegel, 1977) alliance. Thus, information moves from a static conceptualization to a mobile understanding creating networks of knowledge. Cognitive ownership becomes cooperative, empowering students to resist against the monopolizing of education imposed by hegemonic faculty. Inspired by the ideology developed by the Mondragón Cooperative Corporation, we contend that meaningful practices in higher education should be based on intellectual relationships: professor-student, student-student, and professor-student-society. The core of these relationships is the humanistic building blocks of the aforementioned networks of knowledge. In order for humanity to reach a level of mindfulness (Langer, 1997), outstanding teaching practices should be contextualized in renewed educational environments that promote awareness for diversity; a diversity that generates empathy for transcultural contexts defined by multidimensional views based on current practices.

Lacking on ‘humanitat’, students become an easy material to manipulate by cognitive corporations. We argue that fast-food knowledge is consuming the educational horizons of college students turning their academic scopes into narrow paths of facts lacking information and substance. The didactic thirst to learn and develop a passion for learning has developed into tunnel vision practices darkening students’ sense of ownership of their learning process. Consequently, universities have become houses of knowledge instead of being homes for human and social development. The college student is at home on the university, but he does not have her/his cognitive dwelling there (Heidegger, 1971).

In order to regain this sense of dwelling, we have designed a methodology that educates students to become critical thinkers in both public and private universities. Our methodology moves from a lecture model to a participatory learning process. The first tends to sedate the language organ (Chomsky, 1999) due to the fact that it is a
univocal communication. In this instance, faculty talks to the student not with the student, limiting for the expansion of meaningful knowledge and critical thinking. The only linguistic code utilized in this process is the one instituted by the “academia”. Therefore, the academic horizons of students are delineated without their self-experienced wisdom.

We promote participatory linguistic knowledge as a viable means of communication whereby both students and faculty engage in thought provoking dialogues. These discussions allow faculty and students to build a zone of proximal development (Vigotsky, 1986) where they switch the role of knowledgeable other. By practicing this model, we have noticed students transcend from a self-centred practice, a practice focused on their right for good education, to responsible practices that impact the well being of other members of society.

Being active participants requires critical active reading of texts. Active reading involves a “hands on” experience with books. In this process, students deconstruct (Derrida, 1982) words in order to build knowledge instead of regurgitating facts to us. We, faculty meet our students halfway in the reading process by discussing the texts together even before the students have a full understanding of the concepts. Meaning is constructed as a cooperative reaction to the written word. This allows for the formation of learning alliances from where new knowledge is created and action plans are developed. On the other hand, lecture based reading creates a dependent learning experience where students await the knowledge of the academia to reach an understanding of the texts. In this model, understanding precedes discussion where in our model discussion leads to comprehension. This skill enables students to build bridges between the written word and the written world (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

The tools needed for constructing bridges are experiential assignments rather than formal assessments (tests). Testing fosters a pseudo sense of mastery of concepts narrowing the social and academic boundaries of students. Nonetheless, building bridges through comprehensive and authentic didactic processes bestows a broader understanding. All our assignments are open-ended responses to literature. We begin with double-entry journals as a platform for discussion of our readings. Following this micro-analysis, our midterms and finals are meta-meta cognitive
reflections on the thoughts expressed in the double entry journals. This vertical approach to knowledge ends with a case study assignment based on field work experiences. The final result of our assessments sets up an ongoing learning process that serves as a springboard for further inquiries.

This extended learning experience eradicates the credential knowledge developed by cognitive corporations. Learning has been encapsulated in the hands of corporate culture, impeding students to attain social relevant knowledge as well taking an active role in society, creating social and human development. We feel responsible for fostering a critical thinking pedagogy in our classrooms. As transforming educators we cannot allow cognitive corporations to devour our culture. Thus, our teaching practices target the idea of a student who reads, thinks, understands and acts.

Universities since the beginning of the twenty-first century are battling against the fragmented knowledge sponsored by the mass media. We realize that our task as educators goes beyond the panoptic walls that once protected the academic knowledge. Therefore, our practices scaffold the development of a sound critical thinking philosophy. It is in our hands to bring back ‘humanitat’ and social responsibility to the ‘aula’. Knowledge is not for sale it is to be acquired.

“By the end of the twelfth century, there were already de facto organizations of masters, students, or both known as ‘universities’ (for example, universitas magistrorum, or ‘university of masters’; universitas scholarium, or ‘university of students’; and universitas magistrorum et scholarium, or ‘university of masters and students’)" pp. 35 (Grant, 1996)

The second millennium brought the idea of university, where faculty and students analyzed texts and through discussion had the opportunity to generate a cooperative model of learning. The premise of this model was that all participants had an active role in the function of creating knowledge. Active participation led to having high expectations for all entities, which in turn created a well-rounded definition of human development. The latter was defined from three different perspectives: Student views, faculty perceptions, and student and faculty analysis. This three-dimensional approach
to ‘humanitat’ constructed the idea of a scholar that had the strength to lengthen her/his learning experience, to widen the spectrum of the learning outcomes, and to deepen the content of her/his inquiry. Thus, education sought to integrate all its facets in order to sustain the volume of its content.

Today in our universities, hundreds of students expect to be spoon-fed with “junk” knowledge that is digested without cultural references. Many institutions have lost the capacity to build cultural bridges between the lives of these students and the knowledge generated in the academia, thus universities are moving towards a flatten model of learning. Within these environments, students adopt a motionless role when they enter the aula; their expectations are to receive some “snapshot” knowledge instead of acquiring the tools needed to manipulate information in a way that becomes an effective influence in our society.

“Junk” knowledge in this context is spelled out as jaded, where students’ thirst for learning is overcome by apathy; univocal, where students are recipients not participants; numb, where students deviate from meaningful content; and kingy, where students expect to be served knowledge. This “Junk” knowledge is missing the required cutting “edge” component needed to turn the ‘recreation’ of knowledge into a constructive learning experience for the individual and its impact on society. “Edge” is constituted by an emancipatory character that allows the student to actively play her/his role in society; by a didactic mode that empowers students with a practical methodology; by a generous attitude that students show when sharing their knowledge with others; and by an eliteless trend that helps students to eradicate the stratification of knowledge. Students are trapped in between “junk” and “edge”; thus, faculty plays an important role in bringing back the humanistic essence of learning.

The essence of learning
Learning involves a metamorphic process by which the individual engages in an internal cognitive dialogue with their own personal beliefs and their interpretation of information. The conjunctive nature of knowledge, defined as cooperative, communal, and communicative has been overtaken by strategic actions (Habermas, 1979a: 41), actions that shove faculty to treat students as objects instead of subjects limiting the
reflective learning process to a pure cognitive transaction. These strategic actions utilized in universities have their origin in k-12 institutions using standardized, scripted programs built by cognitive corporations, which eliminate cognitive active consensus between faculty and students. We argue that standardized teaching practices implemented in these settings are creating a new generation “J” of students whom are defined by the idea of a subtractive education (Valenzuela, 1999) that portrays them as the ‘problem’ of the aforementioned loss of capacity.

Once K-12 students enter universities they continue to be portrayed as the ‘problem’ within the ‘aula’ of universities. In these ‘aulas’ there are only two goals: faculty want to have full control of the learning process and ‘universitarios’ want to have success as the only guideline of their educational experience. Good pedagogical practices foster democratic principles that help college students understand that knowledge provides rights as well as responsibilities. The rights of students are as follow:

- Equal access to ‘eliteless’ knowledge
- Differentiated learning and teaching
- Faculty embracement of student diversity
- Global knowledge

Their responsibilities are as follow:

- Respect for both vernacular and academic knowledge
- Transdisciplinary approach to course assignments
- Appreciation for faculty’s experience and understanding of knowledge
- Readiness to create an impact in society

Rights are secured when students have the opportunity to receive an education that will nurture their human development. Responsibilities are denied when faculty utilize banking models (Freire, 1970) which in turn cultivate passive learners in search of “junk” knowledge. The new generation of “junkies” has become ‘aficionados’ of these practices. Consequently, they befall into an educational parallel where they seek to be instructed rather than educated.

**Constructing Cooperative Social Change**
We, as transformative educators, believe that students becoming agents of social change, measures the success of universities. Thus, universities that aim to support the development of students as social responsible human beings have to analyze their actual perception of accomplishment. Is social change in universities encouraged in the ‘aula’ by creating action plans that promote the use of critical thinking strategies? Or is social change a fallacy universities embrace to captivate future clients/students? In other words, is social change a trip to a title/credential or a journey to human development? In our eyes, these questions are answered by adding to the idea of Foucault’s (1997) conceptualization of history, “it does not simply analyze or interpret forces: it modifies them (the relations of force)” (pp. 171), the schema of social change. Within these historical terms, social change is defined as a sum of small trips discussing and picturing knowledge that equals to a journey where students create action plans to modify the current network knowledge and its control over society. This journey is a process that takes place through four quadrants-trips (figure 1).

During the first stage of this journey, faculty and students begin their building process in quadrant A; a space where faculty facilitates and guides the analysis of the written text with the idea of creating knowledge based on semantic interactions between the meaning of the text and the experiences of the students. Words, sentences, and paragraphs are deconstructed and stored to reach the final goal, which is the development of action plans. At this stage, cooperative learning is defined by student-teacher work. Following this stage, students move to an independent scenario where they create meaning by comparing and contrasting their thoughts with those of their peers. Once a new meaning has been established faculty, along with the students, contextualize the acquired knowledge that students have gained by reading critical texts. Contextualization is
understood as the process that empowers students and faculty to become a person that, “each time uses his or her capacity, the community is stronger and the person more powerful. That is why strong communities are basically places where the capacities of local residents are identified valued and used” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, pp. 13). Lastly, students develop action plans that will have an impact on their work and society. Throughout these four stages, the participants are constantly shaping the idea of ‘humanitat’. At the beginning of this journey, students perceived that ‘humanitat’ was a concept born in a “Universitas magistrorum et scholarium [Universities of masters and students]”, at the end, if there is any, students coined ‘humanitat’ in a “societas scholarium et cognitio [Society of students and knowledge]. Thus, ‘humanitat’ has been moved from the universities to society where it belongs.

Out of each one of these quadrants small cooperatives: professor-student, student-student, and professor-student-society inspired by the ideology developed by the Mondragón Cooperative Corporation, are built to ensure that meaningful practices in higher education are owned by the participants of the learning process. The philosophy of these cooperatives rotates around one principle (Semitiel, 2006): dialogue framed by a transdisciplinary and holistic perception of the learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are humanistic-capital generated by the cooperatives. Participants invest the humanistic-capital in their society through mindful practices (Langer, 1997) that renew communities by promoting awareness for diversity, which in turn generates empathy for a transcultural knowledge that transgresses the ideas of gender, race, or socio-economic status.

Students in the University of the Third Millennium come from various socioeconomic statuses and diverse ethnic backgrounds; consequently, if we are to create equity and social justice in teaching practices, faculty and students have to expand the concept of diversity beyond race, gender and sexual orientation. Many universities claim to be diversified due to the fact that their student body represents multiple ethnicities; yet, it is forgotten that in our society the first filter students have to surpass in order to become ‘universitarios’ is built on economic webs. At this point, a question rises: Are students who enter the university a true reflection of the diversity of our society and if they are, do these students have the seed of ‘humanitat’ needed to
become social agents at the end of their college education? Our experiences have taught us that the new generation of “J” students enrolled in universities neither represents the diversity of the society nor have been cultivated with the human spirit required to continue the search of knowledge.

Transforming Universities

This new generation “J” of students is educated without comprehensive learning processes, processes that allows them to discover the benefits of scholarly practices as well as to grow as active citizens doted with critical thinking. Critical thinking (McLaren, 1993) is a way of rationalizing and internalizing the negative effects of banking-lecturing speeches. Comprehensive learning processes are dialectical (Hegel, 1977) exchanges among professors and students in order to generate action plans. In these exchanges, information moves from a static conceptualization to a mobile understanding, thus creating networks of knowledge. Cognitive ownership becomes cooperative, empowering students to resist against the monopolizing of education imposed by hegemonic faculty serving the interest of cognitive corporations, such as textbook publishers, future recruiters, and elected officials. Cognitive corporations in control of knowledge ‘capture’ faculty in the same way that pharmaceutical sales representatives swoon over physicians to have them prescribe their drugs. Thus, cognitive corporations in their educational practices resist the genuine nature of learning, which is accompanied by cognitive exploration and guidance (Adler, 1939).

Faculty and students need to collaborate in the learning process in order to create a didactic experience led by faculty guidance and student discovery (Ducasse, 1944). A critical thinking pedagogy exemplifies cooperative networks amongst professor-student, student-student, and professor-student-society. Knowledge is the product of cognitive ownership, understanding and intellectual discourse (Adler, 1939).

In a comprehensive learning process led by a cooperative model, ideas acquired should possess sustainability and duration due to its full understanding by students. There is a difference between understanding and remembering concepts. Remembering assumes that learning is the cause of simple instruction without acts of thinking and understanding on part of the students (Goldberg, 1996). It is evident that
there is a war against meaning in our educational institutions (Giroux, 2000). Meaning has succumbed to the tentacles of “junk” knowledge; universities in the third millennium have underestimated the function of “edge” in the learning equation.

Fast-food knowledge is engorging the educational horizons of college students and turning their academic scopes into narrow paths of facts lacking information and substance. The didactic thirst to learn and develop a passion for learning has developed into tunnel vision practices darkening students’ sense of ownership of their learning process. Consequently, universities have become houses of knowledge instead of being homes for human and social development. The college student is at home in the university, but he does not have her/his cognitive dwelling there (Heidegger, 1971). This absence of intellectual dwelling is the effect of an overrated approach to credentialing knowledge. Therefore, more and more students enter the university guided by only one idea, to obtain a credential that will facilitate their way into the ‘fonctionnaire’ class. By doing so, universities become kafkanian places where the process of learning lacks on creativity, places where the idea of confrontation to the present (Deluze & Gattari, 1994) is seen as a utopia. In this environment, professors are neither partners of learning nor knowledgeable others; professors are only an obstacle to reach the desirable knowledge socially framed by a credential. Students pay their tuition with the firm believe that this economic transaction will guarantee their ‘pass’port to success. Skills and knowledge loose their identity; where they were once approached as perpetual venues, impressions and ideas to a new world (De Landa, 2006), now they are defined as temporary tools to a world of commodities, that fill their homes, once again falling short of building a social dwelling.

Communication vs. Listening

In order to regain this sense of dwelling, we have designed a methodology that educates students to become critical thinkers in both public and private universities. Our methodology attempts to exchange the subtractive aspects of credentialing education, that portraits students using Montaigne’s words as “a bottle that must be filled” instead of “a fire which must be ignited” (1575, http://oregonstate.edu) for an additive education that is moving from a lecture model to a participatory learning
process. Lectures tend to sedate the language organ (Chomsky, 1999) due to their univocal communication nature. In this instance, faculty talks at the student not with the student, limiting for the expansion of meaningful knowledge and critical thinking. The only linguistic code utilized in this process is the one instituted by the “academia.” Therefore, the academic horizons of students are delineated without their self-experienced wisdom.

We promote participatory linguistic knowledge as a viable means of communication whereby both students and faculty engage in thought provoking dialogues. This further step is consistent with an ecological approach (Sinha, 1988) to dialogues, in which faculty and students create a joint, active communication to transform themselves and their intellectual environment. These discussions allow faculty and students to build a zone of proximal development (Vigotsky, 1986) wherein they switch the role of knowledgeable other. By practicing this model, we have noticed students transcend from a self-centered practice, focused on their right for good education, to responsible practices that impact the well being of other members of society. Consequently, the student learning outcomes are becoming social rather than individualistic which defines human development within society; society frames and provides meaning to the student in order to create a schooling process that builds on the capacity for the intellectual comprehension (Goldberg, 1996) of “edge” knowledge; as opposed to “junk” knowledge. “Education is the science of the formation of character” (Dewey, 1964). Thus, its aim is to shape the curiosity of students as well as to manage their academic, emotional and human development (Brunner, 1966). Student learning outcomes are the result of a pedagogical elasticity fostered in the ‘aula’ by implementing participatory learning processes leading to the engagement of active reading as opposed to lecture reading (Mann, 1867). Active reading requires literary interaction with the text, interaction that highlights comprehension, criticism, consistent mental engagement and reading for the purpose of understanding educational concepts and its impact on human development (Emerson, 1946).

Becoming an expert in active reading is a skill that can benefit students in all aspects of life. On the other hand, lectured reading or ‘prescribed’ reading limits the creativity of students due to its linear approach (Goldberg, 1996). In lecture reading,
faculty determines what students should read and how they should read, and what should be gained from the reading. Additionally, minimal critical thinking engagement with the text is exhibited, students read for the purpose of being entertained by the text, and students tend to read from beginning to end without proper nourishment of the mind. Thus, under the premise of lectured reading, faculty sacrifice the individuality of students by narrowing their creative scope to the confines of the ‘prescribed’ reading (Mencken, 1949).

Being active participants requires critical active reading of texts. Active reading involves a “hands on” experience with books. In this process, students deconstruct (Derrida, 1982) words in order to build knowledge instead of regurgitating facts to us. We, faculty meet our students halfway in the reading process by discussing the texts together even before the students have a full understanding of the concepts. Meaning is constructed as a cooperative reaction to the written word. This allows for the formation of learning alliances from where new knowledge is created and action plans are developed. Conversely, lecture based reading creates a dependent learning experience where students await the knowledge of the academia to reach an understanding of the texts. In this model, understanding precedes discussion where in our model discussion leads to comprehension. The latter enables students to build bridges between the written word and the written world (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

We realize that lectured based reading becomes a one-dimensional channel of communication where students learn to process information in a very small-minded level (Goldberg, 1996). In our approach, we aim to transcend beyond superficial processing to a more insightful analysis which in turn leads to more dynamic discussions and learning between faculty and students. Meaningful learning involves a significant range of active educational engagement from all entities in the ‘aula.’ Consequently, information learned for the purposes of meeting traditional assessments is, for the most part, promptly forgotten unless it meets need, desire, and curiosity of pupils (Goodman, 1969). Our goal is to shape students into lifelong learners; individuals with a profound level of character whose second nature is to promote social change in our society.
Supporting Knowledge

The tools needed for constructing bridges are experiential assignments rather than formal assessments (tests). Testing fosters a pseudo sense of mastery of concepts narrowing the social and academic boundaries of students. Though faculty and administrators are aware of this fact, tests are the most common tool utilized to evaluate students’ knowledge. Young (1990, pp. 206) postulates, “education credentials and standardized tests results function in our society as the primary proxies for direct assessment and prediction of job performance”. Thus, our goal as transforming educators is to reverse the testing flow by building aqueducts through comprehensive and authentic didactic assessment tools, that bestow a broader understanding of the knowledge manipulated by students and faculty. In our courses, assignments are open-ended responses to scholarly and vernacular literature. When creating syllabi, it is important to create a balance between written, academic knowledge and oral, primeval wisdom. By utilizing both academic knowledge and the wisdom generated in the community, students develop an awareness that not only helps them to navigate the educational system in order to obtain their credentials but also generates conscientization (Freire, 1972) to make them realize that true essence of knowledge is to virtuously (Boal, 2000) utilized it without asking for social recognition.

The process (figure-2) to supporting this level of cognition begins by asking students to complete double-entry journals as a platform for discussion of our readings. Readings are dissected to support students in their analysis of information, which broadens their minds (Sizer, 2005) by adding new schemas to their ‘humanitat’. Following this microanalysis, our monthly assessments are meta-meta cognitive reflections on the thoughts expressed in the double entry journals. This vertical approach to knowledge ends and begins at the same time with an action-research project. Action-research engages students on, “transformative action, that makes a difference in the life-worlds of both the researcher and the researched. The applicable domain of action research is both description of, and prescription in, the social world of humans” (Diessner, 2000). Actions force students to explore the practical application in social environments of all written hypothesis. Social applicability is always the final reference that either approves the reflections and actions conducted by students or
refutes their analysis. Consequently, goals—objectives—in these assessments are met as far as the learning process has served as a springboard for social change.

Extending the learning experience to areas of action adds a third dimension to the two-dimensional, flat credentialing knowledge developed and sponsored by cognitive corporations. By adding this depth, the learning that once had been encapsulated in the hands of corporate culture, impeding students to attain social relevant knowledge as well preventing them from taking an active role in society, is then transformed into social responsible critical thinking pedagogy. Three- dimensional learning protects students from being devoured by cognitive corporations that control the market of knowledge from the moment it is imprinted and encoded on their books until it is read by students and faculty. Students through action exercises approach the written text with critical eyes when reading, with a social conscious mind when writing, and with a political soul when acting.

Our role as educators is to create an environment that reinforces accountability for all the participants in the learning process in two different levels: the first is cognitive
accountability, defined as the responsibility that participants bare to commit to the learning process and being aware that knowledge is there to be gained not to be given and; the second is social accountability, which comprises the commitment to share the benefits of the individual human development, obtained through cognitive reflections, with the society where students are living as a way to recognize that there is not ‘scholarium without societas’.

Conclusions: (Uni)-versity enforcing (Di)-versity

“Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. Similarly, every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience. The original task of genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely ‘to change the world’, but also –and above all –to ‘change time’ (Agamben, 1978, pp. 99).

Universities since the beginning of the twenty-first century are battling against the ‘chronosless’, fragmented knowledge sponsored by mass media that utilizes the ‘mcdonalization’ of ideas as its cognitive appeal. The needed time to fully understand written texts and to grasp the needs of diverse, cultural rich communities is now used to partially read the required books and to picture communities with ‘mtv’ eyes. Educational practices required an epistemological shift to recuperate the ancient idea of time, a time dedicated to expand and create knowledge through imaginative paths. Pedagogies need to scaffold human development with the implementation of a philosophy based on critical thinking. We, professors have the social responsibility to ensure that students grow as scholars as well as active citizens. The future of our society is in the hands of the new generations of students that populate our classrooms with a variety of socio-economic goals and personal dreams.
Our experiences have informed us that effective teachers are the ones that meet the needs of all their students without losing the rigor needed to create meaningful experiences. Knowledge, today, contains more diverse connotations than the universities built in the 11th century. Yet, they still have the goal to educate students, to open their eyes, to transform their world and universe. After thousands of years negotiating with knowledge, the focus in universities continues to be the analysis of ‘humanitat’ and social responsibility, thereby, universities have to shun out the idea of becoming trade markets where these ideas and others are advertised as commodities. We understand that knowledge is not for sale it is to be acquired.
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