



EDLSC Professor
HIRAI Tatsuya

- **Research Field:**
Career counseling,
Cross-cultural counseling
- **Subjects:**
Career Design I,
Multicultural Cooperative Workshop
(MCW)

Interview date: October 2021

Tips

1. **Understand the power of role models in students' learning: empower student TAs to share their learning experiences and incorporate those experiences into the teaching content**
2. **Create opportunities for students to connect the lecture content to their own lives for an experiential and expediated learning process**
3. **Believe that students are capable and have so much to offer, and turn one-way teaching into a mutual learning process**

Q: In your classes, which subject do you plan for the most?

A: The course in which I put most of my effort into planning is the Multicultural Cooperative Workshop (MCW). This course is offered in both English and Japanese for first-year students. It is a team-taught class, meaning that we work as a team to conduct classes. A typical team will include an English-basis professor paired up with a Japanese-basis professor, four leader teaching assistants (LTAs), and sixteen teaching assistants (TA). To ensure that this large group of professors and student teaching assistants work in sync with the demands of the course, we have established a set of practices:

1. Before the beginning of each semester, two professors from EDLSC (Education Development and Learning Support Center) hold a 3-day LTA

training session, and a 2-day TA training session. During these training sessions, LTAs and TAs work together as teams to increase their competency as teaching assistants through experiential learning. They learn about weekly class content, and practice their teaching skills. In addition, TAs will be briefed about the rules and work conduct.

2. The professors and TAs hold pre- and post-class meetings each week to discuss student concerns and address any issues which might arise, and discuss possible solutions to such issues.

3. Weekly training sessions are held throughout the semester to evaluate the performance of each team member. As the quality of teaching in the MCW course is heavily reliant on individual input from both professors and teaching assistants, we are constantly training and retraining the instructors.

Q: In your classes, what do you do to increase the quality of student learning?

A: Experiential learning is a tool I use to enhance student learning. This teaching technique is centered on the idea that students must be able to connect taught theories to their everyday lives. I believe that it is easier for students to understand concepts when they can relate to them. The starting point of this teaching approach is ensuring that the class dynamics enable this connection.

The process begins by dividing the class into two parts: the lecture and the seminar sessions. In the case of MCW, I spend 30-45 minutes delivering the main lecture to approximately 100 students. The remaining 60 minutes are then broken down with four seminar groups of six members each, three Japanese-basis students and three English-basis

students. During the main lecture, I utilize brainstorming platforms such as Padlet and Mentimeter. The idea behind these platforms is to develop a space where students can brainstorm, collect their thoughts, and document the sessions while the concepts are still fresh in their minds. This platform allows all students to participate at once which I find helpful when sharing ideas in a group setup. This method also allows each student to connect the lecture material to their individual experiences.

Through my teaching experience, I discovered that most students have limited practical experience to connect the knowledge they possess. Therefore, by dividing the session into a lecture and seminars, I give the students room to connect the class content to their practical experiences. For example, if we discuss intercultural communication during the

lecture, in the seminars students use Padlet to describe their respective communication style and discuss how to be inclusive of all the differences in the group. This kind of simple exercise aims to raise self-awareness in a group setting, which is critical to becoming a multiculturally self-aware individual.

The use of TAs as leaders in the seminar sessions is also important for the experiential learning process. For many first-year students, TAs are role models. Their leadership and facilitation further promote engagement from the students, and they may inspire first-year students to enter leadership positions both in and outside of the class. Some of the TAs' roles include facilitating interactive class contents such as ice breaker exercises, group activities, and in-class discussions. TAs further provide positive and constructive feedback on MCW students' group performance and essay contents. These motivational

comments help to develop peer connections between students and TAs through mentor-style relationships, which can mature into meaningful networks later on in life. As former MCW students, TAs provide a unique angle to the learning process which is often appreciated by the students. For example, they can help Japanese- and English-basis students establish nonverbal forms of communication such as the use of hand gestures (such as the "OK" gesture) as a method to confirm that other members understand.

Q: In your classes, what do you do to increase students' motivation for learning?

1. Peer assessment

Most of my classes involve group work and in most cases the groups include both students who are

motivated to carry out the given tasks and students who are not so motivated. If left unchecked, this mix may negatively result in the demotivation of previously motivated students. Having students assess each other's performances enables students to be responsible and stay engaged in the group activities, both inside and outside of the class. Students also find peer evaluation to be empowering and an opportunity for providing positive constructive feedback.

2. Guest sessions (APU Alumni)

In two of the courses I teach, Career Design I and Peer Leader Training, I often invite APU alumni or senior APU students to join our sessions, or show a video interview of the alumni. This method is another way of using role models as motivation to learn class

contents. Career Design I introduces students to the process of designing their actual careers, so using alumni who are currently working and who went through the same process is a practical way to show students the result of this process. Moreover, this practice helps students decide their career paths and develop personal networks early on in their university lives.

3. Utilizing Zoom functions to engage students

Over the past few semesters, I have developed new techniques to motivate students in online classes, such as utilizing the direct message function on Zoom. Most of my classes involve energy-intensive group discussions, and one way to keep students motivated is by showing appreciation for their contributions. For example, after I assign them to

Pre-Training Session for MCW LTAs



small Breakout Room groups, I do follow-up visits to these groups. If I discover a student who is actively participating in the discussion, I send a direct message to them with an appreciation note. This seems to be a small act, but I believe that it encourages students to continually contribute to group discussions.

Q: When improving the contents of your classes, what kind of steps do you take towards improvement?

A: I use three tools when improving the contents of my classes. The first tool is feedback and surveys, the second tool is post-semester adjustment of class content, and the third tool is attending APU faculty development workshops, and other external educational workshops. In the case of MCW, we have a meeting at the end of

each semester with the 14 professors involved in the course. During this meeting, we discuss the various issues that arose throughout the semester to gain feedback, and discuss how to improve the class for next year. In addition, the Academic Office releases the class evaluation survey results at the end of the semester, and I usually note the areas for improvement based on the student feedback. My post-semester class content adjustment is then mostly based on the meeting at the end of the semester and these survey results.

I also attend or lead APU faculty development workshops and other external educational workshops. Annually, I attend an average of ten workshops, some of which I participate in as a listener and some of which I lead as an instructor. These workshops allow me to develop new skills, gain new knowledge, and adapt to new teaching

techniques which other professors are using. These workshops have been especially useful during this pandemic period, as they have helped me navigate from in-person to online learning in consistency with other fellow professors. I can also receive feedback on my teaching style through these workshops from other seasoned educators.

Q: What do you think is important in the process of education?

1. Believing that students are capable and have so much to offer

As an MCW instructor, I work with student TAs. This opportunity made me realize that students possess wonderful potential with the interpersonal and facilitation skills required to teach and manage classes effectively. Instead of viewing students as

experiences, as curiosity enables them to continually grow through learning new things and become better instructors as a result.

In a nutshell, the process of education is an interactive process between the instructor and students. When the instructor believes that students are capable and have much to offer, the instructors will become curious to learn from their students and the joy of learning will therefore be delivered to both the students and the instructor.

Q: What do you expect from the students who take your classes?

1. Possess the ability to design your path

This expectation specifically applies to students who take my Career Design I class. Over the years, I have

passive or naïve learners, I have come to realize that we instructors need to instead provide students with opportunities to showcase their talents. Having students be TAs and encouraging them to lead group discussions empowers them to express themselves and share their unique experiences and talents. These actions inspire students, allow them to gain confidence, and enable them to experience leadership in action to realize their leadership potential.

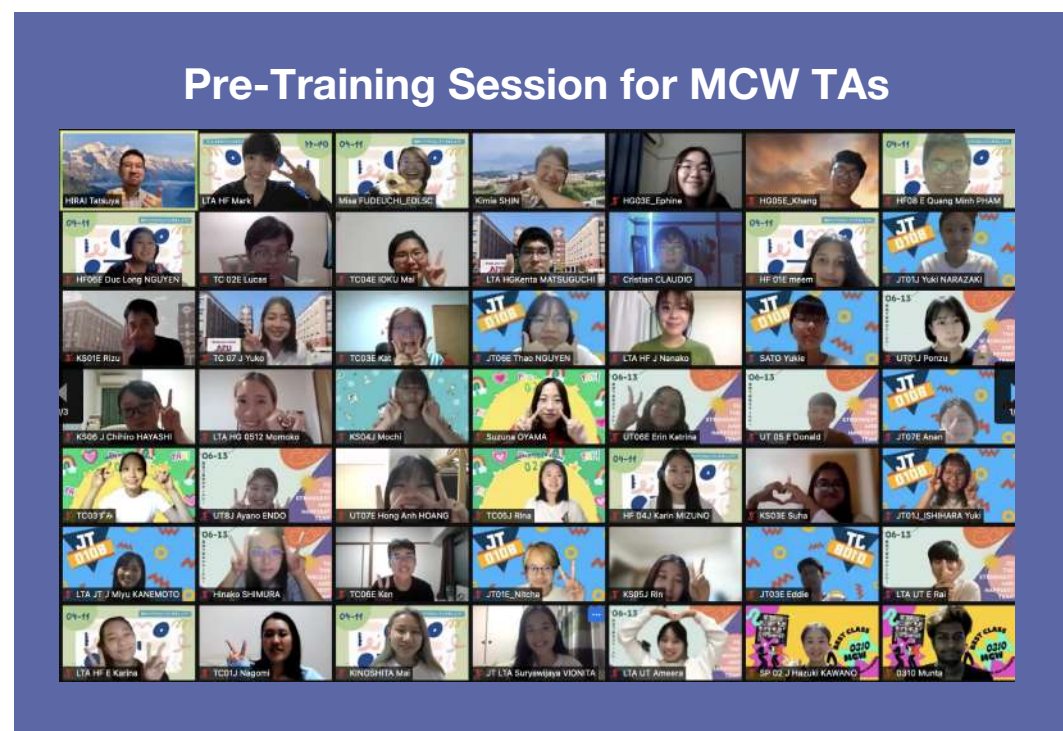
2. Enjoying learning as a professor

As an instructor, it is important to also be a part of the learning process and enjoy this process. By enjoying learning, the instructor can convey and pass on that same energy to the students that they are teaching. I think it is important for instructors to remain curious and open to new learning

met students who possess high GPAs, are actively involved in extracurricular activities, and take various classes, but are still unsure about what they want to do in the future. The above scenario is analogous to having various vegetables but not knowing how to cook. Merely having various vegetables is not sufficient, a person must ultimately possess both a variety of ingredients and the ability to prepare a delicious dish. Therefore, students should be able to have a balance between good grades and achievements and the ability to design their life path. I believe that they will ultimately have a successful future if they achieve this balance.

2. Friendship and networking

University is an opportunity for students to develop meaningful friendships as well as network. Having friends and a good network supports future



endeavors such as continuous intercultural learning, initiating creative projects, and/or establishing a business, for example. I have been approached by numerous alumni who credit group work and classroom interactions as having helped them to develop lasting friendships and a global network of a life time. Therefore, I recommend that students make the best use of developing friendship with people from every corner of the globe, and these friendships will often support and encourage them in the future.

Interviewer Impressions

I took Professor Hirai Tatsuya's Career Design I class during my 4th semester at APU. Career Design I was an interactive class that was broken down into a main lecture and group discussions. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) theory which explores the concept of personality typology was introduced by the Professor. This tool helped me to self-introspect on how I perceive the world and make decisions. I found this tool to be useful not only for this particular class but also in other aspects of my life. I now incorporate the MBTI model whenever I make critical decisions and I must say the quality of my decisions has improved significantly. The group members I worked with in the class have also become my friends and a part of my growing and diverse support network. I therefore see how the strategies Professor Hirai discusses directly benefitted me as a student.

What is [Q]?

At APU there are many professors who put together wonderful classes, and if we could get to know how these classes are planned, it would contribute to the improvement of other professors' classes. For that purpose, we have begun doing interviews in order to learn about class planning. These articles have been entitled [Q], comprising a variety of meanings such as: increasing the [Q]uality of classes, answering [Q]uestions to increase quality, and forming a [Q]ueue, or line, of class improvements. We would be very happy if these articles could contribute to the [Q]uest of APU professors' class quality improvement.



Interviewer

Name: MUROMBA Pascal
Simbarashe

College: APM

Country: Zimbabwe

Message: Hello! I am Pascal. I love reading books. Two of my favorite books are *Educated* by Tara Westover and *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama. Politics and sustainability are some of my favorite topics. I am currently learning martial arts and I find it very interesting.

