



# CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

## IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

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# Keynote

***Where the Wild Things Are:  
Crucial Conversations in Higher Education***

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# Purpose of a University Experience

The purpose of an university degree is about more than workskills training & future employment - Yes these are part of it, of course, but a post-secondary degree experience is also about critical and creative thinking, empowerment, becoming a well-rounded, participatory citizen, and searching for difficult truths. I should also point out, these are not necessarily mutually exclusive!

# University faculty have academic freedom

University faculty...

...are experts entitled to academic freedom and thus the freedom to approach teaching their subject matter as they see works best - Academic Freedom is typically defined and protected in our collective agreements.

# Neoliberalism

a rearticulation and reconfiguration of the eighteenth and nineteenth century liberalist argument that market exchange captures an essential and basic truth about human nature and the creation and maintenance of social order (Dean, 1999: 159; Harvey, 2005). As such, it should become the model for conducting and managing a host of activities that were previously deemed “outside of” or “above” the intrusion of the marketplace. . . . This new “greater good” was seen as being brought about not through cooperation and the governmental leveling mechanisms of the past but through the self-interested activities of actors each working independently and unknowingly . . . empowered consumers-citizens and taxpayers whose desires and self-interest would lead them to demand low costs, accountability and transparency from all of those who provided them with products and services, including the state. (Ward, 2012, pp. 2-3)

# New Public Management

NPM is taken to generally consist of: a) the adoption of private sector management practices, b) the introduction of market-style incentives and disincentives, c) imposing a customer orientation coupled with consumer choice and branding, d) devolving budget functions while maintaining tight control through auditing and oversight, e) outsourcing labour with casual, temporary staff (Ward, 2012), f) unbundling the public sector into units organized by product, and, g) emphasizing greater output performance measures and controls (Lapsley, 2009; Lorenz, 2012).

# Audit Culture

Schwandt (2015) characterises audit culture as being ...closely associated with neoliberal theories of governance and the reform ideology of New Public Management (NPM). The general thrust of the reform is to improve the efficiency and performance of public sector organizations by making services more responsive to users or consumers, applying private-sector management techniques with a strong focus on benchmarking and measured performance, and creating a performance-oriented culture in the public sector. (p.9)

# How audit culture manifests itself into teaching & learning, and degree programs

- A. Teaching Excellence Frameworks (UK),
- B. Increased insistence on Outcomes-based teaching,
- C. Entrance and Exit Exams (or standardized testing comes to higher education)
- D. Specifically, Ontario's Strategic Mandate Agreement  
Performance-based Funding to be worth 60% of funding



## Provider name

## Award type

Gold 72

Silver 135

Bronze 62

Provisional 30

## Nation

England 286

Wales 8

Scotland 5

## Higher education provider

[University of Abertay Dundee](#)

[Aberystwyth University](#)

[Abingdon and Witney College](#)

[The Academy of Contemporary Music Limited](#)

[Accrington and Rossendale College](#)

[Activate Learning](#)

[AECC University College](#)

[ALRA](#)

[Anglia Ruskin University Higher Corporation](#)

[Architectural Association \(Incorporated\)](#)

## Award year

June 2017

June 2018

June 2018

June 2018

June 2017

June 2017

June 2017

June 2018

June 2017

June 2018

## TEF rating

TEF Silver

TEF Gold

TEF Silver

TEF Bronze

TEF Bronze

TEF Silver

TEF Silver

TEF Bronze

TEF Silver

TEF Provisional

# Table Discussions

Consider this...

Performance-based funding produces not quality, but compliance, more likely to shut down than to encourage critical thinking and creativity, and as such, it should be abolished.



# Crucial Conversations

Some skills to help  
us disagree (effectively!)



**“If you are going to change someone’s mind,  
you need to know where their mind is first.”**

**- Roger Fisher**

# POSITIONS

- The answer one side is seeking
- Can only be satisfied in one way
- The means to an end

# INTERESTS

- Underlying needs, goals, concerns
- Can be satisfied in many ways
- The end









## POSITION (answer/result)

Audit Culture is bad  
and should be done  
away with completely

## OPPOSING POSITION (answer/result)

Auditing universities  
is a good thing and  
we should make the  
requirements stricter

## POSITION (answer/result)

Audit Culture has to go

**INTERESTS** (needs, goals,  
desires, concerns that drive  
the position)

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## OPPOSING POSITION (answer/result)

Audit Culture has to stay

**INTERESTS** (needs, goals,  
desires, concerns that drive  
the position)

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## POSITION (answer/result)

Audit Culture has to go

## INTERESTS

(needs, goals, desires, concerns that drive the position)

Universities should:

- Foster critical, creative and engaged citizens
- Provide diverse array of consequential scholarship
- Have broad understanding of what constitutes knowledge
- Focus on community-based research, not corporate controlled research
- Provide greater access to resources and opportunities for everyone
- Not force scholars to produce papers just to check off a requirement (i.e. value alternative forms of scholarship)

# Framing Issues to be Resolved

- Phrase as an open question:
  - “How can we...?”
- Focus on generation options (not gathering data)
- Use language of interests
- Combine interests of both sides:
  - “How can we (insert interest of person A) while (insert interest of person B)
- Use interests as criteria for selecting options

# Why-Type Questions

What is it about (insert the person's position) that is important to you?

How would (insert the person's position) help you?

If (insert the person's position) prevailed, what concerns would that raise for you?

# Six Primary Challenges of Difficult Conversations

- Process Issues
- Identity
- Emotions
- Assumptions / Expectations
- What Lies Beneath the Conversation
- What Happened

## 5 of My Good Qualities

1. Competent
2. Caring
3. Respectful
4. Good Parent
5. Good Team Player



# Key Triggers

## 5 of My ~~Good~~ Qualities

1. Competent
2. Caring
3. Respectful
4. Good Parent
5. Good Team Player

# Emotions

- Not good or bad – they just are
- Behaviours are good or bad
- Anger can mask other emotions (embarrassment, shame)
- Emotions are feedback
- Repressing  $\neq$  Resolving