



AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID S. BRIGHT AND ROBERT E. QUINN : TRANSFORMATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

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10 **Abstract**
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12 The purpose of this interview is to explore the concept of transformational teaching in business
13 education and to discuss the path to successfully implement and manage transformational
14 teaching from the teacher's perspective. Robert E. Quinn, the M.E. Tracy Collegiate Professor of
15 Management and Organizations in Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan, and
16 David S. Bright, Professor of Organizational Behavior in the Raj Soin College of Business at
17 Wright State University, were interviewed to share their views and experiences of
18 transformational teaching. In their view, transformational teaching is creating the conditions in
19 which students have their taken-for-granted assumptions challenged. Through this process,
20 students can acquire new capacity and interact with the world in a new and more effective ways.
21 The interview is followed by reflection and discussion on the perspective that they shared.
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40 Keywords: Transformational teaching, Transformational learning, Constructivist pedagogy,
41 Roles of the teacher, Educational philosophy, Future of management education
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**AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID S. BRIGHT AND ROBERT E. QUINN:
TRANSFORMATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING**

What is transformational teaching?

Quinn: Transformational teaching is simply transformational influence in a classroom. The teacher uses idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation to great alter expectations, behaviors, and the capacity to learn.

Transformative learning entails a shift in the student's deeply held assumptions. The students suddenly see themselves and the world differently. Because they take a new perspective they behave in new and more effective ways. They become empowered people and life-long learners.

Bright: I agree. Transformational teaching generates a significant shift in the consciousness of students. On a personal level, students experience a transformational shift in how they understand themselves—their strengths, their potential, and their abilities. At a collective level, students develop an appreciation for how they themselves can create a transformational influence in the world—on other people, in organizations, on fields of practice, and more. For me, the transformational classroom environment is a place in which students feel safe, but challenged—where they are regularly at the edge of their comfort zone in terms of what they know.

How is transformational teaching related to your teaching philosophy?

Bright: The desire to invite transformational learning in students is fundamental to my aspiration as a teacher. I want students to have experiences that help them to develop both conceptual and visceral understanding. I want students to discover and internalize the

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3 perspectives, emotions, and behaviors that will enable them to be effective, creative, and
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5 transformational citizens in any organizational setting. This level of deep understanding is
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7 especially important for the topics we teach in organizational behavior. Students cannot really
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9 understand motivation, leadership, team membership, and so forth until they have experienced
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11 these ideas—personally and authentically.
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15 For example, if we understand leadership as a capacity to influence others, then by
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17 definition every student has the potential to be a leader. To help students discover or develop
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19 their personal potential for leadership, I create experiences and encounters that bring students
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21 face-to-face with their own skills, innate tendencies, preferences, strengths, beliefs, values, and
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23 virtues. I want to provide them with an opportunity to articulate something about the essence of
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25 who they are and their potential to be extraordinary. Through the structure of the class itself, I
26
27 strive to create the conditions that will allow them to activate and develop this potential.
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32 **Quinn:** Ten thousand hours is a seemingly magical point in the development of a human
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34 strength. If you practice something for ten thousand hours your chances of performing at a
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36 world class level greatly increase. Now think of this. Every one of us by the time we graduated
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38 from college has spent fifteen thousand hours practicing something. We practiced sitting
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40 passively in a chair while somebody of average ability and passion talked at us. The notion that
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42 teaching involves a person of expertise and hierarchical authority dispensing information on
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44 passive recipients of lower status permeates our culture. It is most difficult to transcend such
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46 enculturation. We all have these assumptions etched into our brains.
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51 So when I talk about transformational teaching, I am talking about of us stepping outside
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53 of natural assumptions and conventional logic. A transformational teacher is a positive
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55 deviant.
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3 My teaching philosophy is to create a context in which the students become positive
4 deviants. Instead of assuming hierarchy, expertise, and acting upon passive subordinates who
5 need to be externally motivated, I try to build a context of equality, curiosity, and exploration.
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7 For this to happen, extrinsic motivation has to become intrinsic motivation. The students, as
8 David pointed out, must feel challenged and supported. This can only occur if the classroom is
9 an organization of higher purpose and shared trust. A transformational teacher is a
10 transformational leader. In a transformative organization or transformational classroom, human
11 potential unfolds at a faster rate.

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13 **What does 'transformational' mean? Could you give me some examples which can help us**
14 **understand what it is?**

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16 *Quinn:* Let me first give you examples of transformation in three faith traditions,
17 Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. A historic moment in Judaism, is when two women come
18 to Solomon, both claiming to be the mother of a baby. Solomon says, in essence, 'Fine, cut it in
19 half give half the baby to each one.' One of the women then says, 'No, let her have the baby.' It
20 becomes clear that she is the real mother. So what has occurred? Solomon has reframed the
21 situation in a way that brought out a new perspective and new behaviors followed.

22
23 In Christianity you'll find numerous examples in the life of Jesus. Probably one of the
24 most obvious is at the temple. They drag a woman in and claim she has been caught in the act of
25 adultery. They ask if she should be stoned. Jesus just sits there and draws in the sand. He looks
26 up and says, 'He who is without sin let him cast the first stone.' The accusers walk away. What
27 happened? Jesus reframed the situation and behavior immediately changed.

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29 In Buddhism they often use a paradoxical challenge, a riddle or a puzzle to alter the
30 underlying perspective. 'Okay I want you to do X but you can't use these conventional tools.'

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3 The mind is forced to transcend natural assumptions and conventional logic, the actor must see in
4 a new way.
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8 An example for a teacher would be this: 'I want you to design an introductory course in
9 your area of expertise, but you can't use and props such as black boards, white boards,
10 computers, books, text books, desks, there is just you and the students and nothing else. Now
11 design the class.'
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17 What happens at first is panic. 'It is impossible.' Yet if a person stays with the
18 challenge, the person is driven to ask the most basic questions about what it means to teach. The
19 imagination begins to work and ideas start to flow. The impossible challenge becomes an
20 exciting challenge. With the new conceptualization comes new motivation and new behavior.
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27 **What about transformational teaching? Could you give some specific examples of**
28 **transformational teaching and learning that you have experienced?**
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31 *Bright:* I can think of many tipping point moments of transformation in a class.
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33 Something about this moment shifts the reality of the class and the fundamental assumptions of
34 the students.
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38 One example: I had been teaching a class on organization development and change.
39 During an early segment of the class, I asked the students to participate in a fishbowl exercise.
40 Members of the class were split into an inner group and an outer group. Members of the outer
41 group would watch members of the inner group as they discussed some aspect of their
42 experience in the course. Then, students switched places so that everyone had a chance to be
43 both an outside observer and an inner-group participant.
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3 The tipping point came during the second of a three-day sequence. I enjoyed sitting in
4 the inner group where I felt I could be most effective by participating in the discussion. In class,
5 I was kind of excited about something, an insight or a discovery, that I felt compelled to share.
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10 After the session finished, one of the women in the class came to me and challenged my
11 presence in the inner group. She said, 'Dr. Bright. I really appreciate what you're trying to do,
12 trying to help us and everything. But *you're getting in the way [of our progress as a group]. We*
13 *need to do this [exercise] on our own.'*
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19 Immediately, I sensed truth in what she was saying. I said, 'You're right!'

20 Her challenge became the starting point for our next session. I said, 'After our last class,
21 I had this conversation with Lindsey and she told me what she was thinking and feeling. She
22 told me that 'I'm in the way.' I think she is right, and I admire her courage to say what many of
23 you may have been thinking. Do you agree with her?'

24 This moment led a healthy discussion in which I could legitimately say, 'We need to
25 change. You do this exercise without me. You need to own what happens in the group.' The
26 consciousness of the class about my role as professor and their potential as students was
27 fundamentally transformed in that moment.
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32 So for me one of the indicators that students are experiencing a transformation is that
33 their dependence on me as the authority figure fades. This is the change that allows me to move
34 from the foreground to background, to stop being the 'sage on the stage,' and move to being a
35 'guide on the side.' My role shifts from being the one who supposedly has all the answers, to
36 being a coach and a resource. Such moments indicate that students are growing in their sense of
37 self-efficacy and personal potential.
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55 **What about your experience Dr. Quinn?**
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3 **Quinn:** Here is an example of transforming assumptions and empowering new behavior.

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5 I often have my students do a group exercise. I first explain that a core story is a story at the
6 heart of one's identity. I give three personal examples. Then I create groups and ask each
7 student to share their own three examples. At the conclusion, everyone reports extreme bonding
8 and optimism about the potential of the group. When I ask about the implications of the
9 exercise, they manufacture reasons why such authentic conversation could not occur elsewhere.
10 When I challenge them they are left to explore the possibility of creating sacred space in other
11 contexts. I also challenge them to converse at that same level of authenticity for the remainder of
12 the semester. They do. I have done this exercise all over the world, including cultures where
13 everyone told me it would not work. It always works. The transformational model is not bound
14 by national cultures. It is bound by the universal fears like the fear of human intimacy.

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16 I'll give you two more recent examples. At one point after every session I have the
17 students write feedback cards. I pour over the feedback and I make adjustments. At the start of
18 the next session I give them feedback on their feedback. A common, early theme is something
19 like this; 'Why be so soft with student answers, why not just tell people when they are wrong?' I
20 usually pose something like the following:

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22 'Let's assume that I'm a fourth grade math teacher and I say to the three of you, how
23 much is seven times six?' And Johnny says, 'Teacher, teacher I know it's forty.' And I say,
24 'Well Johnny talk to me a little bit about how you came to that conclusion.' And Kate says, 'No,
25 it's fifty.' And I say, 'Well Kate, tell us about that.' Then Stan raises his hand and says, 'It's
26 forty-two.' Now here's the interesting question. Who got the right answer? Normal logic says
27 Stan did. Stan said forty-two. What if that's wrong? What if Stan was just part of a larger
28 process of collective learning? What if what Johnny and Kate said led Stan to the right answer?

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3 I suggest that the answer was co-created by a collective process and students learn more
4 effectively when that collective process is at the highest level of functioning. When it is,
5 learning is elevated. High quality relationships are crucial to the process. The teacher's job is to
6 facilitate the emergence of purpose, psychological safety, adaptive structure, and improvisational
7 exploration. The teacher's job is to create a learning organization characterized by generative
8 conversation. One aspect of the process is my listening deeply and then adding dignity to every
9 answer. I tell them that their job as leaders will be to create contexts in which the shared mind
10 can flourish. In the feedback that day there are always a large number of them that indicate they
11 had never conceived of the emergence of the shared mind.
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24 Here is my second example. I recently had a student raise his hand. We were about half
25 way through the course, and he said, 'Is this really an MBA class? Isn't all this stuff just
26 obvious?' Everyone looked at me expecting me chop his head off. Instead I asked him to tell me
27 more. When he struggled I helped him articulate his position, I made the case for him. When
28 the position was clear, I asked him to share the personal changes he had made based on the
29 material. He had a hard time identifying anything. I then gently explained what I had already
30 said many times, that the class was not about reviewing the literature on leadership, and that it is
31 about becoming a leader in real time. That day the feedback cards were filled with statements
32 about that exchange and how it illustrated what the class was really about. I was modeling
33 something that is hard to learn and seeing it in real time was important. Some of the student
34 could now see themselves doing something similar.
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50 **So, transformational teaching is about specific moments in the classroom?**

51 *Quinn:* It is a combination of classroom events, assignments, reading, and group
52 experiences that transform and empower. *On the last day of a recent class, I asked what the*
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3 *students were taking away.* One woman raised her hand and she said, 'I was working in an
4 organization with an abusive boss. I thought that, that was the way you behave in business and
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I myself to that kind of abuse.'

Because of the accumulation of the things that happened in and out of class that woman
acquired a new perspective and now she has new capacity. She will be an empowered and
empowering human being.

**In your earlier work, Dr. Quinn, you have talked about fundamental state of leadership
(FSL, Quinn, 2004; Quinn, 2005; Caza & Quinn, 2007) in transformational teaching and
learning. How are they related?**

Quinn: The FSL concept suggests that leadership is influence not position. Our
influence varies according to the psychological state we are in. It is normal for me to be comfort
centered, externally directed, self-focused and externally closed. I can, however, shift and
become results centered, internally directed, other-focused and externally open. When I make
this shift as a leader or a teacher I begin to behave in new ways and my influence goes up. With
increased moral power I can attract students into more generative conversations and the
classroom becomes an organization of accelerated learning.

Students can learn to make this shift. In my class, every week they have to write a
paragraph about a challenging situation in which they pause and ask themselves: Am I results
centered? Am I internally directed? Am I other focused? Am I externally open? The questions
alter their consciousness and they try strategies they would not have normally conceived. In

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3 their paragraphs, they include what they learned by trying the new strategy. The paragraphs are
4 all shared. These paragraphs become a crucial part of the course. The students end up learning
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8 how to empower themselves in any situation.
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11 Reading a text on leadership is not going to give that capacity to a student. The notion of
12 learning to be a transformation leader is about learning to be. It's about self-change and personal
13 growth in real time.
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17 **Bright:** Yes! Bob's notion of 'beingness' really resonates with me. In a very literal way,
18 we become transformational when we model for our students a healthy way 'being' in our
19 relationships with others. For many students, this mode of being is very different from what they
20 have experienced in other aspects of their lives. Quite frankly, the only way to really teach
21 people about a transformational state of being is to help them experience it for themselves.
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29 In fact, transformational teaching may feel inaccessible to professors who themselves are
30 puzzled by or unfamiliar with what this 'beingness' is.
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34 **How can we encourage and facilitate transformational teaching?**

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37 **Bright:** The answer to this question requires more than a brief statement, so I'll just try to
38 hit a few key points.
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41 I believe that all teachers are capable of creating transformational experience for students.
42 I have often talked to other teachers and professors, especially newcomers, who will get very
43 excited, at first, when I describe how I teach. They will say, 'Wow! What are you doing? How
44 are you doing it?'
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50 However, I also hear an unspoken question in this reaction: 'How could I ever do that? I
51 don't get it. This approach seems very esoteric, very ethereal. It sounds like you almost have to
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3 become the Buddha of the classroom to actually teach in a transformational way? How would I
4 actually do something like this?’
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8 The truth is that there really isn't a magic formula that works for everyone. One key for
9 me is simple: if we expect our students to be at the edge of their comfort zone, we need to model
10 for them how to effectively deal with the risks and the discomforts of deep learning.
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14 So, the personal capacity to facilitate transformational teaching starts with a desire and
15 willingness to explore what this transformation means for oneself, not only as a professor, but
16 also as a person. A willingness to explore at this level may require a shift of paradigm.
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18 Sometimes, it requires us to challenge deeply held assumptions about our roles in society as
19 professors and learners, and a commitment to take risks and challenge oneself to do things that
20 may feel uncomfortable at times.
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24 I also believe it essential to understand that the capacity for transformational learning is a
25 dynamic property of the classroom as a human system. This capacity exists in the fundamental
26 nature of the relationship between the professor and the students and the relationships among the
27 students as they work with one another. As a professor, one of my first priorities is to nurture
28 this capacity in the way that the classroom evolves as an organization, especially in its earliest
29 stages.
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33 One of my highest priorities is to *establish a foundation of connectedness* across the
34 classroom. I don't mean connectedness in the sense that we have a similar background or can
35 share a joke, but rather, we collectively develop a common experience that enables, mutuality,
36 tensility, and the other dimensions of high quality connections that Jane Dutton and her
37 colleagues have described.
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3 In part, I want students to feel a sense of connection with me. But more importantly, I
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5 want students to feel some degree of connection and commitment to each other. We need to
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7 establish a relationship in which we can be authentic with one another. *We have to be able to*
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9 *share both negative or corrective feedback, as well as positive feedback* with one another
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11 without invoking defensiveness and helplessness, the killers of deep learning.
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15 Finally, there is an adage that ‘students don't care what you know until they know that
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17 you care.’ It’s amazing to me what students will do for you and for each other in the class, if
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19 they know that you and other students are invested in them as human beings. Transformational
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21 teaching takes place in the context of transforming relationships that evolve and grow as the
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23 class develops over time.
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27 I really hope that those who are just starting their teaching careers will have the courage
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29 and foresight to say within themselves, ‘I want to become a transformational teacher,’
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32 **Quinn:** I totally agree with that relational web which is what we're really weaving all the
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34 time so we're building trust, building trust, building trust constantly, allowing that collective
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36 intelligence strength to flow.
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39 Recently, we did an executive program with a very skeptical group of government
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41 leaders. During the first five minutes I said, ‘Look what I want you to understand is that for the
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43 next five days you will get everything I have to give. When I go home at night I will not leave
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45 you. I will lie in bed every night replaying the entire class. I will constantly try to understand
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47 what you need next.’
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50 Now that wasn't a gimmick. That wasn't a technique. It was just an authentic statement
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52 that I happened to make for the first time ever.
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3 We had a spectacular week. At end one of the women said, 'The moment you said you
4 were all in, I decided to be all in, because I don't expect that from a teacher.'

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8 Now you can repeat those words and not have it make a difference. A gimmick or a
9
10 technique will not work. As David said, it is about connection. Every aspect of transformational
11
12 teaching has to be authentic connection.

13 14 15 **Have you had any resistance to your teaching approach?**

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17 **Bright:** From what my students tell me, their experiences in other classrooms are very
18
19 traditional. My sense is that in *higher education most instruction continues to be delivered*
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21 *through didactic lecture, followed by traditional testing methods.* This is the standard paradigm
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23 in which the student's role is to be passive unless otherwise invited.
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27 So, when students first enter my classroom, where I am violating many of the rules of
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29 that paradigm, they have to grapple with a new version of what it means to be a student. They
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31 have to accept that they will have to act, think and behave differently if they want to succeed in
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33 my class.
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36 Most students find this adjustment to be stressful. They will react by making statements
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38 like, 'Please just tell me what I need to know and I'll learn it and let's be done with it.' But then,
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40 the more time they spend immersing themselves in the experience, the more they develop
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42 relationships with peers, the more they become accountable to one another, the more they
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44 experience the thrill of deep learning.
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48 I may have one or two students every year who experience such intense dissonance that
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50 they never really fully figure it out. Then they become defensive and blame me, 'This Bright
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52 guy, he's making me do these things that I shouldn't have to do as a student. Why are we doing
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54 this? We're going back to kindergarten in this class, etc.' My interpretation of these reactions is
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3 that the student is caught in the mindset of being a passive student. They are simply struggling
4 to understand how to function with a new set of expectations. *The paradigm shift isn't just for*
5 *the professor; it requires something more of students too. It challenges their fundamental*
6 *assumptions about the role of a student.*
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13 **Quinn:** No matter the audience, if I invite people to the transformative paradigm, there
14 will be fear and resistance. The student should not be blamed for feeling what the teacher has
15 stimulated. I have to take accountability for their fear and I have to help them find the courage to
16 confront their fear.
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22 I often teach EMBA courses. The students tend to be high powered people. They have
23 excelled within the transactional paradigm. Debate is not going to persuade them to take a new
24 perspective. So, instead I give them a simple assignment. They have to locate someone in their
25 lives and become, not a mentor, but a transformational mentor. The assignment is to transform
26 the life of their selected person. As they sense their inadequacy, they become open to new ideas.
27 I help them use the fundamental state of leadership questions. Over the course of the semester,
28 most of the students report a fundamental change in their outlook and their capacity.
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39 Transformational leaders do not see resisters as 'problems' they only see people of
40 potential. A transformational teacher does the same.
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43 **How to deal with resistance, any tips?**

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45 **Quinn:** As I briefly mentioned, I inform my students about the nature of the class at the
46 very outset. The first three pages of the syllabus tell them why they shouldn't take the class.
47 Then they have to apply to get in. I give them every chance to opt out. So they are in the class
48 by choice but there will still be resistance when I confront them with the things they fear.
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3 **Bright:** In my case, I mostly teach required classes, which I suppose might intensify the
4 potential for resistance. I believe that all one can do as a teacher is to create the conditions that
5 maximize the likelihood that transformation and learning will occur. The professor cannot
6 control the actual transformation that occurs in students. Students have to work out their
7 learning and transformation through their own efforts.
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10 The truth is that I don't really feel that I encounter that much resistance – at least not in
11 the sense that students refuse to do what I ask of them. I feel that it is important to allow
12 students to feel whatever they feel in reaction to my class. But I also create many opportunities
13 for them to talk about or process what they are thinking and feeling as they try out new
14 experiences.
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17 In one class, I also have my students write a journal to capture a snapshot of the feelings,
18 thoughts, and emotions, at different times throughout a term. Toward the end of the class, I have
19 them do an analysis of the experience over time. They see the evidence of transformation
20 through this analysis. This exercise is an epiphany for many of them as they begin to understand
21 how initial resistance melts away through a developmental process. At the end of the course, we
22 talk about these transitions. They'll make comments like, 'Those first two or three weeks of this
23 class seemed to drag on forever! It seemed like so much work.'
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26 But then they act their way into an understanding of a student-empowered paradigm. As
27 this transition develops, the dissonance and discomfort fade away. The early moments in class
28 become like a distant dream. At the end of the class they're like, 'I vaguely remember feeling
29 that way, but that was so long ago.' Once the transformation begins to take hold, learning
30 becomes synonymous with experience. Students often describe the learning as 'just happening,'
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3 that it was effortless, or did not feel the same as the work that they associate with a more
4 traditional instructional paradigm.
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8 **So it is faculty members' job to create the condition for transformational learning, not**
9
10 **simply leading or forcing the learning.**
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12 **Quinn:** A transformational teacher facilitates the emergent learning process. It cannot be
13 controlled. It is a complex-adaptive system. It requires the teacher to be a more complex and
14 adaptive person. It is about honoring the agency of the students. It is about making self-change
15 in real time. It is about equality and connection, not hierarchy and independence.
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18 **Bright:** Yes, the principle of *respecting student agency or autonomy*, rather than
19 controlling student action, is really critical. We cannot force students to absolutely embrace or
20 love anything we're saying or asking them to do. Excellence is a choice that can be influenced
21 by context.
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24 Students have to trust that there is something on the other side of their experience in my
25 class that will be of value to them. So, in this sense it's an act of faith on their part to do what the
26 teacher asks. When they act, they place themselves in a position in which they can be
27 transformed, even if their vision of why they're doing what they're doing is limited.
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30 I don't spend a lot of time trying convince students that the intense experience of my class
31 is 'scientifically proven' to be more effective (though it is, of course!). What I have found is that
32 they are not going to understand until they act their way through the transformation I am trying
33 to help them achieve. So, right from the first moment, I focus on creating the conditions and
34 loose structures within which students are inspired to exercise their discretion, autonomy and
35 agency to choose personal and collective excellence.
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3 **Could you talk about the conditions a little bit more? Are there other conditions that**
4 **facilitate transformational teaching and learning besides the one respecting students'**
5 **agency?**
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10 **Bright:** I believe that there are at least three critical conditions – all related to the
11 complex adaptive system of the classroom. First, the class needs to develop *deep connectedness*.
12 This is the relational dimension that we talked about earlier.
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15 Second, the flow of class activity needs to generate *pervasive feedback loops* in multiple
16 dimensions. I pay great attention to the routines and cycles of interaction. For example, students
17 have numerous opportunities to experiment in my class. They might deliver a short presentation
18 on one or two concepts from a reading. Immediately after their performance, rather than
19 formally grade their effectiveness, we talk as a class: ‘What did they do that worked really well?
20 Why was it effective? What can we learn from what they did, good and not-so-good?’
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32 I try to provide a model for how to provide authentic, helpful feedback. I encourage the
33 students to be very specific about how they can leverage what they do well or adjust something
34 that needs fundamental change. They have several opportunities to provide this style of
35 feedback to one another, not only face-to-face with peers in a team, but also group-to-group
36 across the class. They give each other feedback on most deliverables in the class, including
37 written work, facilitated activities, and formal presentations.
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46 At first, all they want to share are positive comments like, ‘Oh that was great. You're a
47 nice person and we really appreciate what you do for our group.’ This may be true, but it's
48 usually not the whole truth either. There's nearly always something deeper that would be helpful
49 for others to hear. As they practice again and again, they learn how to be more authentic with
50 one another.
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3 The third condition is really a cultural assumption in the class. I want students to
4 *understand that it is OK to make mistakes*, so long as we are learning from our experiences
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6 together. This assumption is key if we want to create effective learning cycles in the classroom.
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10 An example, in my class on teams I'm trying to help students learn facilitation skills. We
11 have a very hands-on textbook that I can hand to a team and say, 'All right! You create a
12 workshop where you're going to help other members of our class practice this skill.' After each
13 group facilitates its workshop, we talk about what they did as a whole class. 'What did they do
14 well?' 'What aspects of their workshop helped you feel connected to the topic? What can they
15 do even better?' And to the presenters I ask, 'What are you going to do differently the next time
16 you have a workshop?' In my observation, the opportunity to make mistakes, yet try again, is
17 really critical to deeper learning. Ideally, I have found that it is best if they have at least three
18 attempts to practice a skill.
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31 **Quinn:** I think there are three levels of teaching focus:
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- 33 • Teacher centered: This is the traditional model with teacher as expert.
- 34 • Student centered: This is the model in which everything is made relevant and the student is
35 invited in as a co-creator of knowledge.
- 36 • Learning centered: This model extends the collaborative process to its highest level. It puts
37 emphasis on the emergence of the collective intelligence. The whole is greater than the sum
38 of the parts and the students learn from the power of their own synergistic efforts.
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48 We have focused mostly on how to move from the teacher centered to the student centered. But
49 we also need to take the final leap to the learning centered.
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51 **What does the class look like when transformational teaching and learning happen?**
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4 **Bright:** If you were to walk into my class, you would see that the room is organized into
5 groups around clusters of tables and chairs. Students self-organize and rearrange the space
6 before I arrive. The room is buzzing with lively conversation as students check in with each
7 other. There is so much energy in the room that I usually have to raise my voice for a moment to
8 be heard above the din. I view this buzz as an indicator of connectedness: they feel comfortable
9 with each other and they seem to know each other quite well.
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18 An indicator that students have established strong feedback loops is they seem to solve
19 their own problems. They answer questions about the class with one another. Students rarely
20 seek me out during my office hours.
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25 A few years ago, I was asked to be on a panel about teaching in a session for new
26 professors. One of the new professors asked us, 'How do you handle office hours? How do you
27 manage the schedule?' My colleagues on the panel all had very good suggestions, but the
28 question had never before occurred to me as a concern. I asked myself, 'How many times in the
29 last year have I actually had a student come to my office with a question about something they
30 didn't understand from class?' At most, I had received three visits. Most of the visits I receive
31 are focused on developing their own ideas. Students will say to me, 'You have given us this task
32 or this objective, and we've got these ideas for how we can do it. Are we on the right track?'
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44 The questions focus on substantive concerns that indicate they are thinking at a deep level.
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46 **Quinn:** In David's class, negative peer pressure has been transformed into positive peer
47 pressure. David no longer has to be the police officer. The students police each other. Each
48 student demands that every other student pursues the collective good. This is one of many
49 transformations that take place at the second and third levels of learning.
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3 **What would be your advice for doctoral students or faculty members who would like to**
4 **learn and implement transformational teaching?**
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8 *Bright:* First, have the *courage* to take risks and step outside of your comfort zone in
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10 what you do in the classroom. The first time I taught using a Classroom as Organization
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12 framework was as a doctoral student. I was about to teach OB for the first time, and I stumbled
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14 into a presentation by Roger Putzel at the AoM conference. I was inspired by his description of
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16 an ambitious experiential design that encompassed the entire semester. I wanted to try it, but
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18 was nervous because it was very different than anything I had ever seen. I called my department
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20 chair, Richard Boyatzis, and said, ‘I’m going to try something that might cause some waves.
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22 Will you support me?’ His reply, thankfully, was ‘Absolutely. Go for it!’ So I took a deep
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24 breath and just did it.
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29 That semester was a crazy ride. It was scary at times. It was very emotional at times, but
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31 I learned so much! The students learned at a very deep level. Most importantly, the experience
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33 fundamentally transformed how I thought about teaching.
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37 The willingness to have courage, to perhaps be seen as different, is critical. You have to
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39 commit to the journey. Making a fundamental paradigm shift in the way you teach requires a
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41 leap of faith, especially the first time you try it.
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44 Second, *find a mentor*. Find someone whom you regard as a transformational teacher. In
45
46 my observation, transformational teachers are very willing to help. You need someone you can
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48 call and say, ‘This is what I’m thinking about for this class. This is why. Am I on the right path?’
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51 For example, in my first experience of teaching CAO, there was a moment when it felt
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53 like my whole design was about to explode. I went to one of my professors, Ron Fry, and
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55 explained everything I was doing. He listened carefully, and then he taught me about how to
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3 manage dissonance through the degrees of discretion that we give students. It was just the
4 insight I needed! I went back, I redesigned, provided a little more clarity and structure on what I
5 was looking for from students. It worked out great!
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10 Third, create your own *internal measures of success*. Then, use these internal measures
11 to manage context. An example: at my school one of standard end-of-course evaluation
12 questions ratings is ‘Student responsibilities are well defined.’ Because of the degree of
13 autonomy I allow, I expect that some students will not know how to answer this one question.
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15 The structure of my class may violate the assumptions that drive that question. Having an
16 internal compass helps me figure out how to manage such issues.
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24 **Quinn:** I would call attention to why someone would want to become a transformational
25 teacher. In the movie *Freedom Writers*, Erin Gruwell reflects on her own transformational
26 efforts. She has a group of impoverished high school students who have been transformed and
27 are feeling hope for the first time. She says, ‘When I am helping these kids make sense of their
28 lives, everything about my life makes sense to me.’
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39 **Concluding remarks**

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41 For Dr. Quinn and Dr. Bright, transformational teaching is creating the conditions in
42 which students have their taken-for granted assumptions challenged. Through this process,
43 students can acquire new capacity and interact with the world in a new and more effective ways.
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45 This approach is based on the belief that everyone, both instructors and students, has the capacity
46 to create positive influence.
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53 Having a conversation with them reminds me of my first teaching as a doctoral student,
54 two years ago. I came to the U.S. to start my PhD program in 2009, and prior to this, I had
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3 studied engineering in college. In other words, I did not have experience or knowledge in the
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5 U.S. education or in a business school. But it was necessary for me to teach an undergraduate
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7 course in Organizational Behavior as part of my doctoral education. It was not possible for me
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9 to be an authoritative, omniscient figure in the class room, because of my lack of experience.
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13 Instead, what I did was respect the students' agency and autonomy, as Dr. Quinn and Dr.
14
15 Bright suggested. I was honest about who I was and what I knew and did not know. I was
16
17 always open to students' suggestions and feedback. Fortunately, most of the students were
18
19 engaging and collaborating. We always had very active discussions, and students did not seem
20
21 hesitant to make comments to each other as well as to me. The class flowed much better than I
22
23 expected. Looking back, I realized that at least a part of my class involved some of the
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25 transformational aspects that Dr. Quinn and Dr. Bright were talking about.
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29 Although I cannot talk about my students' experience and learning from the class (except
30
31 their generous evaluation for the class), to me, the class did break my existing assumptions that
32
33 teaching was about one-way transmission of knowledge from instructors to students. At least in
34
35 my class, I, as an instructor, also learned a lot from my students' experiences and insights, so it
36
37 was not always one-way. Moreover, as we discussed existing theories and cases, students not
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39 only just absorbed the knowledge, but also created new knowledge which was more creative and
40
41 specific to their own situations. Thus, I, as an instructor, also gained new knowledge from the
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43 class.
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48 Despite the overall positive aspects of the class, I struggled with a couple of issues in my
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50 class. One came from a few students who seemed reluctant to actively participate. The tips that
51
52 Dr. Quinn and Dr. Bright shared to deal with students' resistance will be definitely helpful for
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54 my next teaching. It is also personally encouraging, because I learn that even these experienced
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3 faculty members sometimes face similar resistance from their students. However, they were able
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5 successfully manage it, which gives me hope to do the same next time.
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8 I was also struggling with the balance between teaching and my own research. I taught
9
10 only one class, and even this took considerable time from my research. How faculty members
11
12 manage to teach several classes while they work on multiple research projects and other service
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14 has been a mystery to me. What I learned from the conversation with them is that it is their
15
16 passion and enthusiasm that has kept Dr. Quinn and Dr. Bright committed to transformational
17
18 teaching, enabling them to balance their teaching with other priorities. Although it may be
19
20 challenging and demanding, I certainly hope that it is not impossible for us to be committed,
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22 transformational teachers in addition to being successful scholars.
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27 As I reflect more on my conversation with Dr. Quinn and Dr. Bright, I realize that it
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29 would help if the general components, processes, and scope of transformational teaching are
30
31 specified in more detail. For example, although it is clear that challenging students' existing,
32
33 taken-for-granted assumptions is the key in transformational teaching, how I can actually do this
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35 remains somewhat abstract to me. Are there common, universal components in transformational
36
37 teaching? Would it be students' participation, open discussion, or real-life experiences? After
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39 informing students about the nature of the class at the beginning of or before each course, should
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41 relationship building follow next? Would the process be similar to or different from the typical
42
43 processes of team building? Lastly, can or should every class in business school adopt such
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45 approach? Or how does transformational teaching approach coexist and balance with traditional
46
47 forms of classes? Clarifying such components, processes, and scope would make
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49 transformational teaching more accessible and of interest to broader range of instructors,
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60 students, and institutions.

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3 In conclusion, I am very glad I had this discussion with Dr. Quinn and Dr. Bright. It
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5 opened my eyes to new possibilities in teaching, and also affects my experience teaching my
6
7 own first class. Inspired by the new approach to teaching, I am excited about further
8
9 opportunities to teach in my career.
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