Never, EVER blow on a tarantula!

**Introduction**.

Years of experience have taught us tips, tools, and tweaks on common teaching practices and classroom management techniques that not only make our classes more effective, but increase learning opportunities for students by reducing barriers to learning. We’ve learned, largely through trial and error, what practices ‘work’ as well as which fatal teaching flaws to avoid in the classroom. This session revives a MOBTS tradition originally created by a longtime OBTCer and last facilitated almost a decade ago.

Our symposium session will begin with panelists sharing their own tips and stories—why we thought we needed to change something, why we believed we had a good idea to address the issue we were having, and whether we recommend it to others or exhort them to never do it that way! After our sharing and discussion, we invite participants to share their own experiences and tips, recording all of them for a written record and set of takeaway skills for all in the session.

Our individual tips and stories will range from the humorous to the pragmatic. The purpose is to share what we have learned through years of teaching experience and classroom management, through both positive recommendations and warnings about what not to do. While anyone who teaches would come away with useful information, it is most likely newer instructors and those in teaching contexts that are newer to experiential and engaged methods that would benefit the most from the collective wisdom/advice of the presenters and participants.

And of course, the title of this session will be explained…

**Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**.

Theoretically, we practice here what we preach about the experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984). As educators, we have all had many signature experiences that have sent us through that learning cycle and by which we have iteratively crafted effective teaching practices. Concurrently, that same learning cycle has generated understandings of what should be avoided in teaching and learning practices. Both positive recommendations and warnings have been generated through Kolb’s (and Dewey’s) insistence upon reflection and iterative rounds of that learning cycle. In other words, we’ve learned to not simply do the same things repeatedly in our teaching practices, but to adapt and change them upon having some kind of unanticipated or negative experience, considering and practicing an adaptation, and reflecting on that experience to create another ‘round.’

As we consider our host country and venue, the session operationalizes an essential aspect of practice theory (Nicolini, 2012) in that, as experiential teaching and learning practices expand and change based on their context, experiential teaching practitioners evaluate ‘knowledge’ as exhibiting mastery of carrying out an accepted and valued activity, learned from and recognized by one’s community. This communitarian aspect of what we do and how we do it places further responsibility upon us as a community, specifically as the MOBTS community, as the seminal space for experiential teaching in business education. This session engages decades of experience among those MOBTS participants as a community focused on expanding the reach of experiential teaching by supporting those practitioners earlier in their experiential teaching career. We extend Nicolini’s focus on intra-community support, development, mentoring, and accountability in this session by sharing tried-and-true practices with one another, and creating a community of support that can easily be ongoing and global in nature.

Lastly, we base the session in McKnight’s (1995) and Whetten and Cameron’s (2018) exhortations that,

* Self-awareness and reflection are the foundation of effective management and leadership behaviors
* Effective skills can and must be practiced to become natural and reflexive
* Vicarious learning in a collaborative and supportive environment can speed up the learning curve and help us practice more effectively
* We can share with each other our “win” (McKnight, 1995, p. 195) with respect to common classroom issues, and therefore help each other realize effective classroom management techniques

**General Discussion Overview & Session Timing**.

We will begin our session with brief introductions and present the learning goals of the session, as well as the structure of sharing from presenters and then participants. The timing below is based on 90 minutes but we would make adjustments if we only had 60.

Each presenter will take about 5 minutes to share their tips including their teaching context, how the issue came up/became known to the presenter, how they responded, and what they have learned over time. Some of the tips and points we cover will include:

1. Dealing with late semester mark negotiators
2. Managing multiple choice exam discussion debriefs
3. Making online quizzes more effective by using student collaboration and appropriate grading.
4. Marking non-exam participation in large classes using variable reinforcement schedules such as catalyst reflections
5. Re-framing our emotional connection to frustrating or lackadaisical students who do not do their work
6. Breaking down barriers and isolation in teaching by talking to colleagues and sharing information
7. Virtually eliminating make up exam or late work acceptance requests
8. Creating engaging, relevant, and purposeful assignments based on student demographics and psychographics

Next, participants will pair or get in groups of 3 to discuss their own experiences, either responding to what the presenters shared, or, discussing their own tips, stories, and “don’t ever do this” warnings. We will give about 10 minutes for pair/share, then ask participants to share with the whole group.

After the whole group sharing, we’ll take a deeper dive into the list of tips or warnings to ascertain any commonalities or shared reasons why they are either helpful or make things more difficult. What are key aspects of practices that help students’ learning or classroom policies or management? Alternatively, can we identify aspects of practices that seem to usually lead to disruptions or missed learning opportunities?

Our experience with this session is that there are foundational aspects of such tips that can be generated from session participants. It will be interesting to see how these differ in a different teaching and learning geographic region and context.

Examples of key aspects of helpful practices from past facilitation of this session include:

* Practices that maintain or increase student choices and ownership
* Practices that maintain respect for students’ complex and increasingly career-oriented lives
* Practices that focus on equity and fairness in course policies and procedures ; reduce student perceptions of instructor judgment or favoritism

Examples of key aspects of unhelpful practices include:

* Practices that pit the instructor against the “class” monolithically or against individual students; students ‘forget’ that the instructor is on their side
* Practices that are inconsistent with those of other colleagues and faculty in the department
* Practices that do not respect healthy boundaries or role-based behavior expectations

We’ll finish the session with an opportunity for participants to ask questions of the entire group, allowing a crowdsourced response to an issue that has not been addressed, and an invitation to continue to participate in this unique community of practice.

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| General activity | Time needed | Elapsed time |
| Facilitators introduce selves and set up discussion | 5 minutes | 5 minutes |
| Presenters share their own tips, tools, and tweaks with participants. One presenter will record them for distribution | 30 minutes | 35 minutes |
| Participant pairs or triads, then whole group sharing:   * What are their experiences with anything the presenters shared? * What are their own tips? | 25 minutes | 60 minutes |
| Discussion: Commonalities, Deeper Exploration of What Made Things Work/Fail | 20 minutes | 80 minutes |
| Final questions from participants and wrap up, and the reveal of “Never, EVER, blow on a tarantula” | 10 minutes | 90 minutes |

The result will be a potpourri of advice from colleagues about successful teaching/classroom management ideas, as well as pitfalls to avoid, in order to help reduce the learning curve of teaching practitioners.

Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

McKnight, M. (1995). The nature of people skills. *Journal of Management Education*, 19(2), 190-204.

Nicolini, D. (2012). *Practice Theory, Work & Organization: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Whetten, D., and Cameron, K. (2018). *Developing Management Skills* (9th). Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice-Hall.