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Teaching and Learning III

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Round #2 Reflection 2.23.16

For my second round, I focused on the topic of biodiversity. The goal was to introduce the students to the concept and transition from previous class discussions about the different parts of the Theory of Evolution. The round activity allowed students to walk around, find paper caterpillars, and record their observations in a quadrat sample, which is a tool that ecologists use to study species in the area. After scaffolding the note taking, I assigned the students to sections of the room to find the caterpillars.

During the activity, I was checking to see if they were engaging with the tool and if they were able to plot the location of the caterpillars and also track the different species that were in the room. Most of the students had some forms of notes, which was encouraging. A few got confused about how they had to try and get an accurate location and check with their group mates on the note taking. If I included in the directions that they should work with the two groups in each quadrat then that would have helped with reducing confusion. It probably would have made it easier if I just gave them the worksheet.

After students had found most of the caterpillars, I asked a few people to put up their data and have the other students copy down the data from other quadrats. I gave students time to debrief and talk about the challenges of using this tool. Next, I asked them a series of questions to connect the quadrat sample to species analysis overall. Students gave a range of responses that helped show that this tool gives information about the variety of species. I gave them the definition of biodiversity, and asked them to connect the definition with the data. Their homework was to show how the quadrat data gives evidence of biodiversity.  
 I liked how the lesson went; it was an improvement on my first round. In the post round, people talked about how I could have used the beginning class time more effectively. That is something I continue to have issues with, but have received advice I can act on. Piling tasks together, using technology, and checking with groups are among these. It may be easier to just check homework for completion rather than giving time to each student. It puts the onus of comprehension on the student. Other feedback included providing a worksheet to the students to create more time in the end for the discussion and debrief. I felt like I set up their notes efficiently and modeled the note taking well by going through a few examples.

I had modified the homework question a little before the start of the round so that it would require the data from the activity. It was an introductory process, so I did not want to overwhelm them in this lesson. It turned out that the homework question and debrief time could have been used to go more in depth with the quadrat sample data. These are things that help with comprehension; I will work to improve this by working on discussion skills and creating more time with the previously mentioned changes in the beginning of class.

In the next lessons, I plan on explaining the other parts of biodiversity. James had suggested using the format from an ethnographic study. I find this confusing because we’re studying a species and not a culture. I will see if I can find some parallels between these two disciplines. People remarked that I am gaining confidence in my teaching. I'd like to thank Lisa Hua, because she helped film this round. The students liked it, and I am definitely able to see some growth in myself.