

2020 Frontiers in Education Conference

Democratizing Engineering Education Through Contemplative and Mindfulness Practices Workshop

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The funding from SAG was used to register for the Frontiers in Education Conference in order to co-present a workshop to participants. The name of the workshop is: Democratizing Engineering Education Through Contemplative and Mindfulness Practices: presented by Yevgeniya V. Zastavker, Madhvi J. Venkatesh, Julia Benton, and Camille Girard. This workshop was a total of four hours conducted on zoom with presentation slides. This is the [program](#) from FIE - this workshop being workshop 1 on Wednesday October 22nd, slot A. This workshop was associated with the work that I have done with the *SCI 1199 - Contemplating Science: Educational Context and Ethics* course at Olin and the research around the course during the spring and summer. This workshop allowed me to practice engaging with various people on the topic of contemplative practices in education, develop as a scholar, and develop skills in workshop creation and design. In this workshop I did some of the back-end facilitating of sending reminders to participants in activities and organizing breakout rooms. I also acted as a resource with a different perspective, having taken the course that the paper is about as well as having partook in the research around the reflections, I have a unique understanding of the course, the takeaways, and the student experience. I was able to be there as a resource for professors on the student perspective which proved to be powerful for participants.

We ended up presenting this workshop again at AAC & U which allowed us to create a new iteration of the workshop based on what had happened at FIE. These outlines illustrate the changes that we have made which I will briefly overview - [FIE](#) versus [AAC & U](#) outlines. We found that at FIE there was a strong desire to spend time on questions - which we ended up shifting to to follow the group's interest. For AAC & U we had less time (3 hours) to start off with and wanted to allow more time for open conversation so we needed to cut down the activities. We were forced to question what we felt was most important in the workshop for participants to understand the content and get a "successful" experience of covering all the content we thought was crucial while giving wiggle room for the workshop to flow naturally. This experience was fantastic practice for how to work on workshops, how to iterate on these experiences in a more scholarly setting.

The [presentation slides](#) were used on zoom to clearly communicate the activities with participants. These slides have been adapted for the AAC & U version of the workshop so are missing some of the activities that we did in FIE. The workshops created a lot of excitement among the participants. FIE had a group of international teachers that showed a lot of interest in bringing contemplative practices into their classroom and some reached out with questions afterwards already. There was some hesitation to engage with the practices we asked for in the

workshop - as we wanted to learn by doing like Olin says - and this was expected but still interesting to see. We asked for participants to reflect and share and engage in practices that were new - however we saw more and more cameras come on and engagement in conversation as the workshop went on. This culminated into the Q&A push from the participants to even shift the workshop for the original plan. To put into practice the learning by doing was really powerful while also engaging while also being flexible with the plan for that time. The workshop seemed to engage participants and stir up some interest and understanding of contemplative practices in education and how/why they are used.

Documents:

[Presentation Slides for Workshop](#) - this has been slightly altered since we presented a workshop at AAC & U with some changes.

[Program](#) - We are workshop 1 on Wednesday October 22nd, slot A

[Outline of Workshop](#) at FIE, [outline at AAC & U](#)

Reflection

I have been involved and interested in education research and reform since my first day at Olin, this is something that is very important to me. I was a part of a research team with Jon Stolk first year where we published in FIE and I did not end up going to the presentation of the material. This was an opportunity to actually practice those presentation skills in the professional world. Contemplative practices are difficult to bring into the educational world without some resistance and being able to work with Zhenya on this workshop gave me skills and understanding of how to try to design for engagement from various audiences. I also was able to be a part of the Remaking Education team and I loved working on the design exhibit and experience so much that I realized designing experiences was something that I would like to do more of. I find this powerful in the projects I do and would like to do this more with educational experiences and this was an amazing opportunity to expand that knowledge and experience. This was a group of professors and other academic employees from around the world which is very different from the group I am used to at Olin and with ties to that community and so that real world experience of designing to engage a diverse group was really powerful for my education.

Although it is simple I found that this experience made me feel, "oh I can do this!" which is something that is very powerful. I have a desire to design these experiences, education, workshops, and this experience showed me that I can and that there is potential for me to do more in this space. Along with this I was encouraged at the interest from the education space about the work that had been done and that there is interest in the community of new tools to help engage students and even tools that are very different from the current system.

This entire experience buckles down on my passion for design and education. Although I am not sure where I will go this experience shows me even more that I love designing these experiences and after the workshop I was immediately thinking about how to design tools to help bring contemplative practices into the classroom or curriculum that could be designed for more traditional courses. I can see from this experience the growing passion I have to be a part of the changing of current education and that I can play a useful role - maybe research, maybe professor, maybe something completely different - with an understanding and passion for the space.

A final piece of what was really helpful was developing myself as a scholar. I have been a part of studies, been a researcher on those studies, and this was the opportunity to share that information with the outside world in a workshop. Although I have co-authored a paper and designed communication visuals for projects in research I have not had to present or run a workshop based on the concepts. This unique experience of using my roles as student and researcher to help facilitate a workshop was a way to round off my experiences. From this workshop I have become more passionate, well-rounded, and experienced as a student and person.