

Angela Kalis – Giving and receiving feedback

What has brought me to spend some time on this issue is my interest in the exchange about teaching in its actuality. And an important part of learning about teaching for me is feedback.

One of the bottom lines at ECITE is, that we really want to learn from one another about teaching CI and that we do care (that we are not indifferent) about what people get out of the conference. That's why we meet! Without a friendly and caring attitude towards each other, interest in each other and in our teaching, it wouldn't make sense at all.

So it's about sharing our resources with one another, also in form of speaking out constructive criticism. Both sides actively take part in this quite complex process.

On the one hand the person who is giving the feedback (that is the student) by how and what he/she formulates and what sort of body language messages he/she gives, and on the other hand the person who is receiving the feedback (that is the teacher) by how she/he interprets this and what she/he takes out of it for her/himself. So feedback is an attempt to offer something and it seems very important to me to have a friendly and sincere attitude on both sides in this process, so we all get something out of it.

After a long talk with Nancy Stark Smith in Arlequi and a few e-mails want to share these thoughts of her which inspired me, so I would like to apply them in the attitude you have, when giving feedback: the concept of »failing successfully“. In this case you try something, that may be a little challenging and difficult, but you create some kind of "net" or "mat" or anyway an understanding of friendly intent and learning, so that if you "fail", (fall, are misunderstood, hurt someone by accident,...) that there is a margin created for some safety with that, and permission to experiment a little, so you can learn what works and what doesn't and why and how. That (Like a handstand) you can 'go too far' and survive it, all the more energized and informed for trying again. With this point of view, you're not only trying to get or give the actual feedback about dancing or teaching, but also study the process of giving and receiving it.

Suggestions how to approach feedback

☺ From the authentic movement: here the witness formulates, what she perceived and experienced She doesn't say anything about what it might have been like for the mover/in our case the teacher.

☺ From a conversation with Malcolm Manning: As the one who experienced the class you could formulate what you got and from what you would have liked to have gotten MORE of, and like this you express, what you missed.

☺ As a sideline, something I've found useful: Ask about the purpose of a specific instruction that you didn't understand, or which you question. What kind of thoughts have been leading to the choices the teacher made concerning this moment?

☺ As a teacher you could ask to hear about what people learnt in your class, because it is your interest as a teacher to get an impression, how a student is perceiving the class, your way of teaching and the messages and information you are giving.

☺ I was personally inspired by something I recently read in some theoretical literature: "All what is being said, is said from an observer." This is the starting point of H. Maturanas philosophie. Observations are not a subjective "image" (reflection) of items of recognition, rather they develop through the course of the observing process itself. They are getting produced from the observer and are more constructions than preceptions in the common way. The underlying processing of the observation is an operation of "distinction". The second quotation "the distinction, that makes a distinction" (G. Bateson) is about the production and passing on of information just through seeing differences. You need to understand the basic assumptions of a system and then you can name and communicate the differences allowing you to aim for activating new ways of options in thinking and acting.