Teaching Psychoeducation Online at UCONN's Neag School of Education

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Abstract:

Teaching psychoeducation online has not been adequately defined in the educational and psychological literature and the teaching processes have gone unspecified. An expanded definition of psychoeducation is presented and a 10 part process paradigm is presented to help conceptualize future courses. The process paradigm is explained by discussing "Introduction to Counseling and Psychoeducation (EPSY 3333)", a three credit, online course that uses psychoeducational approaches. An evaluation of students in nine separate EPSY 3333 classes (n=203) is reported on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies, the cognitive and affective processes students experienced, the personal action taken by students, and the self-reported impact of the course. The results indicate that students reported the course positively impacted them both cognitively and emotionally and they took action to solve their personal problems. Limitations to the self-report course evaluations are discussed and the need for more complex research is recommended that assesses the effects of online psychoeducation.

Keywords:

Psychoeducation; On Line Teaching; Distance Learning; Teaching Processes; Teaching Evaluations

1. TEACHING PSYCHOEDUCATION ONLINE AT UCONNS NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Distance education is now accepted as an effective way to educate students by most universities. Creating online courses and implementing them is still in the early stages of development and therefore an area for creativity and pedagogical experimentation. Many questions remain unanswered about how online learning occurs and the most effective ways to teach students. Faculty face challenges preparing classes because online teaching is a relatively new pedagogical area and requires reconceptualizing how education is prepared and delivered. Some faculty struggle with reorienting themselves to teach outside the regular classroom and some question whether quality is compromised when teaching online. Furthermore, few theoretical approaches to online teaching exist and therefore some faculty find distance education suspect without defined learning processes and pedagogical principles. What online techniques work, with different groups of students, across different disciplines, over varied time periods, with what expected learning outcomes represent critical questions to be answered. Systematic evaluations of single courses over time have rarely been published but are needed if distance education is to become fully accepted by both students and faculty.

One untested approach to teaching online is using psychoeducation to promote students' intellectual and emotional

development [1, 2]. Theoretical principles about psychoeducation in general are limited in the literature and an example of teaching a psychoeducation class online does not currently exist. A literature search was conducted in Psych Info using the terms "teaching psychoeducation online". Only 20 citations were generated and none of the manuscripts gave an operational definition of psychoeducation. Only five psychoeducational interventions were found in the literature to help people. Psychoeducation has been used to help with people with eating disorders [3] clients with trauma symptoms ([4], dementia caregivers [5], relatives of veterans and civilians living with schizophrenia [6], and schizophrenics and their families [7]. No publications were found using psychoeducation in an academic class and no theoretical models exist to conceptualized how to develop this kind of learning with students in regular and online classrooms.

This paper discusses the first online course taught using psychoeducational principles and summarizes extensive evaluations of this education. The course, Introduction to Counseling and Psychoeducation (EPSY 3333), has been taught at the University of Connecticut for the last 10 years. The specific goals of this paper are to: a) define psychoeducation and discuss how to teach it, b) present a psychoeducational process paradigm for teaching online, c) describe EPSY 3333 and discuss how 10 psychoeducational processes were used to promote student's academic and personal growth, d) report evaluation data of EPSY 3333 for nine different classes, e) summarize what has been learned from the evaluation research, and f) make recommendations for using psychoeducation online and research that can be pursued in the future. The paper is organized by first giving a definition of psychoeducation in the context of 10 pedagogical processes. Next, EPSY 3333 is discussed and evaluation data from many course offerings are summarized, followed by implications of the evaluations for online teaching and the need for future research.

1.1 Psychoeducation: A Valuable, Underused and Ambigious Learning Process

Psychoeducation has a 40-year history but has not been adequately conceptualized and defined in the literature [8]. In the 1970's, psychoeducation was discussed as teaching people helping skills [9]. In the 1980's psychoeducation was described as teaching affective education to students with academic difficulties [10] or using psychoeducational approaches including values clarification, moral education, self-esteem enhancement, and teaching communication/problem solving/decision making skills [11]. In the 1990's, psychoeducation was defined as a unique type of education for students who have interpersonal difficulties [12]. No other definitions of psychoeducation were found in the literature. This brief review over the decades indicates that the concept of psychoeducation has been mostly undefined as an instructional process. Moreover, past definitions have not been specific on how to do psychoeducation and therefore specific processes of this kind of education need to be delineated.

1.2 Psychoeducation Defined: Student Learning Processes and Faculty Pedagogical Processes

My operational definition of psychoeducation is a synthesis of various theories about learning [13], student development [14], and the curative factors of group therapy [15]. Psychoeducation is a pedagogical approach that uses psychological and learning principles to facilitate people's personal, emotional, and intellectual development in a classroom, group, or online settings. This kind of education focuses on both the cognitive and affective domains of learning, implying that feelings and emotions have equal weight with conceptual and factual knowledge. In this way, emotional intelligence [16] and academic knowledge are equal partners in the psychoeducational process, as people think and feel during the learning. Optimally, the learning is conceptualized as having potential for learners to renew and transform themselves personally, professionally or politically.

Approaches to psychoeducation are premeditated, strategically planned, and sequentially ordered to maximize student learning and emotional growth. The instructor uses learning theory and other data based approaches to

connect the cognitive and affective domains of learning in dynamic ways. The instructor invites learners to participate in the learning at their "optimal comfort level" with no pressure to participate personally and emotionally. The psychoeducator is interactive, personal, and strategic in the presentation of the content and regulates the emotional learning, recognizing that resistance or defensiveness may occur. Human vulnerability is monitored and the need to refer students for extra help is commonplace. The above approaches to psychoeducation expand what is meant by this kind of education but fail to address the specific instructional processes for faculty and student learning processes. Both faculty and student psychoeducation processes are discussed below.

1.3 Faculty Teaching Processes

The roles and functions of the professor help define psychoeducation in expansive ways. The psychoeducator creates environments that foster psychological growth and development by communicating positive expectancies for student learning and energy in the classroom. One positive expectancy for learning is establishing that learning is more than just knowing content and includes personal and psychological exploration. Helping students personalize the course content by experiencing thoughts and feelings simultaneously is central to psychoeducation. Instructors prepare specific interventions for psychoeducation to occur in both the affective and cognitive domains and assess students' developmental stage, worldviews, cognitive development, and attitudes toward learning to determine the most effective way to teach.

The psychoeducator provides multiple course contexts, allowing students to understand the content personally, professionally, and politically. Theory is presented that establishes a meaningful context for the entire learning experience and the assessment of students allows the teacher to know students individually and collectively. Norms that promote the sharing of feelings and thoughts in an open and safe setting are established and discipline and rigor are communicated by placing demands on the learner to become responsible for their own learning. Establishing the norms of interpersonal sensitivity, compassion, and listening are also part of creating a positive learning environment. Music and other media are used to create cohesion and possibilities for a community of hope and optimism around universal human issues (joy, love, sorrow, loss, suffering, death). Students are invited to be involved in learning at their "optimal comfort level" and emotional sharing is offered to students as a free choice. The psychoeducator encourages risk taking and exploring new dimensions of self. An emotional vocabulary is established so learners can label, experience, and express their feelings as well self-disclose to others. The instructor models emotional expression and self-disclosure through lectures and written statements to students.

The psychoeducator uses stimulus diversity techniques to keep student involvement high by using multiple teaching modalities and experiential activities to enhance student thinking and feeling. Stimulating media are integrated with the course content to mediate defensiveness, accentuate concepts, and promote personal exploration. Self-assessment checklists help students personalize the course and encouragement is given to be real, self-disclosing, and honest about one's life. With an emphasis on emotion in the classroom, the psychoeducator is sensitive to student defenses and resistance to learning and devises teaching methods to mediate these potential barriers to learning. Additionally, the psychoeducator helps students understand how the class process relates to the course content, by relating interpersonal dynamics to the development of new and old ideas. This dynamic make the course content come to life for students, sometimes right before their very eyes. Students and the professors fluctuate in and out of personal and professional roles, making role flexibility important for both. Psychoeducation also involves helping students work through any painful memories or events that develop by their personal exploration and the instructor shows compassion and care for students struggling with the course by being available to students, not as a therapist per se, but as a supporter of their healing and growth. Encouragement is given for students to show support, empathy, and care to others during the learning process.

1.4 Student Learning ProcessesWith Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation implies student learning that is active not passive, with emphasis placed on personalizing the course content and process. Critical thinking, emotional awareness, and high level self-processing are the expected norms of learning. Emphasis is placed on writing out and expressing emotions and thoughts so that they can be known and owned. The responsibility for learning and growth is placed directly on the student and encouragement is given to assume new roles and consider alternative perspectives both on an affective and cognitive level. Students are asked to face their problems, take risks, and expand their emotional intelligence. Students also learn vicariously by observing others' processes and by considering multiple contexts of the course content. Internal locus of control, the awareness and expression of one's inner values and attitudes, are encouraged rather than just accepting the norms and standards of others and the larger society (external locus of control). Students learn about resistance to learning and how defense mechanisms operate to mediate threatening emotions that may block learning. Encouragement is given to break through resistance and monitor defensiveness so that learning can occur intellectually and emotionally.

2. PROCESS PARADIGM TO IMPLEMENT PSYCHOEDUCATION ONLINE

The operational definitions of psychoeducation specified earlier and the dimensions of student learning and faculty pedagogical processes provide a theoretical base to conceptualize psychoeducation online. **Figure 1** shows a conceptual paradigm that depicts 10 psychoeducational processes to implement courses taught online. These processes were used to conceptualize EPSY 3333 and include: a) Setting positive and hopeful norms and expectancies, b) Gathering data and assessing knowledge retention, c) Providing rigor and structure that promotes critical thinking and effective problem solving, d) Establishing societal and personal learning contexts, e) Promoting learning as personal growth in cognitive and affective domain, f) Promoting student self-assessment using questionnaires and checklists, g) Using stimulus diversity with media, lectures, assignments, and self-reflections, h) Defining resistance, conflict, and defensiveness for students, i) Providing feedback, that promotes risk taking, action, and personal transformation, j) Monitoring student processes by providing personal care and support specifically for vulnerable students. Each of these processes is described later in the paper but first how EPSY 3333 is organized and implemented needs to be specified.
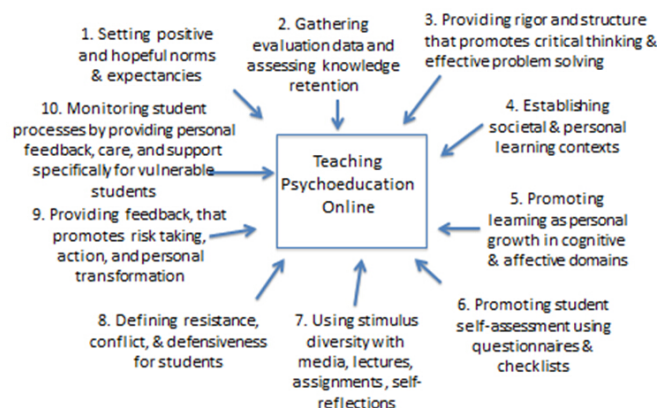

Figure 1.   Process paradigm to understand psychoeducation online.

3. OVERALL DESCRIPTION AND PROCESS OF INTRODUCTION TO COUNSELING AND PSYCHOEDUCATION

Introduction to Counseling and Psychoeducation is an undergraduate, three credit class taught at the UCONN for the last 25 years and has been online course for the last 10 years. The course description is:

Principles of professional counseling including therapeutic processes, roles, and skills. How counselors help people solve problems is explored and student's psychological growth and development is facilitated through psychological education.

The average enrollment in EPSY 3333 is between 20-30 students with two thirds of the students being women. A majority of the students enrolled have chosen majors in psychology, family studies, and education and the average student age is 20 years. The process of teaching includes a carefully organized set of video lectures, readings, experiential/affective activities, group discussions/postings, self-evaluation checklists, music, music videos, documentaries, media clips from movies, quizzes, exams, and ongoing feedback from the instructor. Two books are used in the course; an academic text that gives an overview of the counseling profession [17] and a self-help book that focuses on personal growth and development [18]. The content of the academic text focused on what counseling is and the self-help book describes how to overcome emotional pain and solve personal problems. Both books provide a conceptual and experiential foundation to psychoeducational processes described in **Figure 1**.Video lectures and power point slides are used to communicate the course content and multiple choice exams are given at the midterm and at the end of the class. Students are also required to write a final Personal Problem Solving Paper (PPSP) that promotes the personal growth by having students identify a current problem they are experiencing, apply the problem solving skills learned in class, and attempt to resolve the problem, thereby bringing closure to the class.

All the course interventions are sequentially ordered to activate both the cognitive and affective domains of learning [19, 20]. The video lectures and readings provide a conceptual basis for understanding counseling and personal growth and the experiential activities occur by using provocative media, self-assessments, online discussions, and personally focused assignments that stimulate personal and emotional exploration. Similar to a practicing therapist, the professor's role is one of "clinician in the class" that involves constant assessments of each student's learning, growth development, and problem solving.

Table 1 describes the 19 modules in the course and represents a mix of academic and personal/psychological content for students. In each module, specific academic content is paired with video lectures, written assignments, self quizzes, self-assessments, questionnaires online discussions, various psychoeducational interventions including music, video clips, and documentaries on men's and women's gender roles. There are 11 video lectures, 18 self quizzes, 9 discussions, 3 written assignments, 4 questionnaires, and 2 multiple choice exams. Points are assigned to each activity and grades are assigned based on the number of cumulative points earned across the 19 modules. Criteria for evaluating the course requirements are: 1) Clarity of writing and thought, 2) Factual Accuracy of writing and thought, 3) Validation of views using current theory and research, 4) Creativity of thought, 5) Synthetic nature of thought and writing, 6) Completion of assignments on due dates, 7) Personalization of course content, 8) Contribution to other class members' learning. The complete syllabus for EPSY 3333 is found on my personal web page (http//web.uconn.edu/joneil/).

4. TEACHING EPSY 3333 USING PSYCHOEDUATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

EPSY 3333 has been taught using the 10 psychoeducational processes shown in **Figure 1** with video lectures, readings, assignments, media, and the modular content shown in **Table 1**. Each of these psychoeducational processes

Table 1. Content In EPSY 3333: Introduction To Counseling and Psychoeducation.

Module 1: Introduction: Engaging the Course Positively
Module 2: Overview of Counseling: Definitions and Working With Pain
Module 3: What are People's Major Problems? The Role of Psychological Violence in People's Lives
Module 4: When Living Hurts: Preston Part 1
Module 5: Knowing About Development, the Lifespan and Gender Roles
Module 6: Understanding Your Emotions: Part 2 - Preston and The Wounded Person Cycle
Module 7: Forgiveness: One Way to Let Go of Pain and Anger and Promote Healing
Module 8: Credentialing, Counselor's Careers, and Training Counselors to be Helpful
Module 9: Ethics and Legal Issues and Counseling
Module 10: Counseling Theories, Therapies, and Practice
Module 11: Counseling Assessment, Counseling Relationships, and Counseling Process Skills
Module 12: Making Personal and Psychological Growth: Preston Part 3
Module 13: Importance of Career Development and Positive Mental Health
Module 14: Family Systems, Specialties in Counseling: Families and Couples Counseling, Substance and Alcohol Abusers, and Gerontological Counseling
Module 15: Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy: More Indirect Ways to Help Others
Module 16: The Use of Groups: Creating Therapeutic Environments
Module 17: Counselor's Commitments to Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Special Groups
Module 18: Research, Evaluation, and Accountability
Module 19: Course Closure, Methods of Healing, and Next Steps for You

are described next to explain how psychoeducation is operationalized in EPSY 3333.

4.1 Setting Positive and Hopeful Norms and Expectancies

The first psychoeducational process is establishing classroom norms that promote interaction that is personal and authentic. Classroom norms are necessary because the personal issues in EPSY 3333 are emotionally intense, politically salient, and activate significant questions for students. The challenge is how to harness this intensity, put it to good use, and not allow the class to be reduced to a "pop psychology" experience that is superficial and potentially disruptive for students psychosocial growth. Positive expectancies and norms are communicated by the mini-lecture "How to Succeed in EPSY 3333" that discusses: 1) the importance of coming to class and doing the work; 2) the importance of "in class" thinking and feeling; 3) staying healthy; 4) the value of asking questions and active participation; 5) recognizing that learning is sometimes difficult and stressful; 6) working with resistances and defenses; 7) thinking positive about learning; and 8) enjoying the learning process. The norms are presented to shape the learning process and help students become comfortable, "track" the class process, help and support others, and consider doing self-disclosure. All of the norms are directed at helping students tell the truth about their lives and take action to improve themselves academically and personally.

The benefits of active and participatory learning are discussed in the context of classroom boredom; when passive teachers meet passive learners. I invite students to be involved in the class at their optimal comfort level and this invitation prohibits students from feeling forced into self-examination, class participation, or a process that they are unfamiliar with. The most powerful expectancy communicated is that the classroom can be a place to be transformed, renewed, invigorated, and altered personally and politically. This expectancy may seem overblown and unrealistic, but it is my highest hopes for each student.

4.2 Gathering Data and Assessing Knowledge Retention

Psychoeducational processes include data collection on student characteristics and their learning processes. During the first class, I administer a 15- item needs assessment questionnaire that assesses student attitudes about learning. Typical areas of assessment include learning styles, whether they want class interaction and the use of media, and whether they are willing to put extra effort into the class. During the second module, I report back the data and their personal comments about the class. Needs assessment serves six primary functions: a) helps me create a dynamic and interactive relationship with the class, b) provides information on student attitudes and their needs, c) shows students how interactive teaching and learning works, d) demonstrates my interest in students' input into the class, and e) helps students personalize the course.

Ongoing assessment is essential to understand how different students experience the class. During the sixth module, a "student check" questionnaire is administrated. The questions are: a) How is the course content and process affecting you? b) Are there any special feelings and thoughts from the modules, the readings, or the media? Please give any personal reactions that will help the instructor know where YOU are, c) What one thing would improve the course for you? d) Any other comments. A summary of the responses are given to students using the discussion posting process. At the end of the course, I conduct a final evaluation of the course using the Instructional Impact Questionnaire (IIQ) that assesses students' views of how the course affected them. This impact data, even with their self-report limitations, provide another measure of how the students experienced the course. These IIQ data are reported later sections of the paper. Finally, the assessment of whether student learned the course content (knowledge retention), is assessed through 18 self quizzes and a 50 item multiple choice midterm and 50 item multiple choice final exam. Students are given study guides of the topics tested since the exams represent 50% of the total points in the class.

4.3 Promoting Rigor, Structure, Critical Thinking and Effective Problem Solving

The course is highly structured with eight deadlines for all quizzes, discussions, assignments, personal assessment, and exams. What work to complete is communicated by goal statements, a detailed calendar, reminders about due dates, and easy access to all web pages and activities. Furthermore, before the class starts students are sent two detailed memos (*i.e.* advance organizers) on the course structure that underscores the students' personal responsibility to manage their technology and meet deadlines to avoid losing points that affects their final grade**.**

The promotion of critical thinking and problem solving are accomplished through assignments and discussions that require analytic thought and self- reflection. In many of the video lectures, assignments, and discussions questions are raised that promote analysis and synthesis. Moreover, students are required to respond to other student's discussion postings by affirming or disagreeing with the ideas generated. The discussions allow students to do critical thinking, create content, and connect with each other in personal, supportive, and dynamic ways.

Problem solving skills are demonstrated when students complete the final assignment, the Personal Problem Solving Paper (PPSP). Each student writes about a problem they are tryingto solve using a seven part outline that relates to the psychoeducational knowledge in the course. The professor provides written feedback to each student on their paper and collective feedback is given to the entire class about the problem solving processes described in the papers. The PPSP requires students to apply the course concepts to themselves and demonstrate their problem solving skills in a very personal way.

4.4 Establishing Societal and Personal Learning Contexts

"Context setting" is critical in EPSY 3333 because many students approach courses with biases, stigmas, misinformation, defensiveness, anger, and fear. Under these conditions, students may have difficulty positively engaging course content or being open to psychoeducational processes. Students personalize course content to the degree that meaningful contexts are presented in courses. The major contexts in EPSY 3333 are: counseling as a helping profession, people's psychological problems, societal violence, emotional abuse, working with emotional pain, forgiveness, healing, appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism, effective problem solving, and personal transformation. These are not simple concepts for young students and therefore contexts are needed so that students are not overwhelmed by the topics and can see their personal value.

4.5 Learning as Personal Growth in the Cognitive and Affective Domains

In addition to the academic content about counseling, the class is described as an opportunity for personal growth, a place to explore one's "inner spaces" and make personal change. Helping students personalize the course is accomplished by posing one question to students: "How can this course affect your life now and in the future?" I tell students that my teaching approach is promoting student development based on my teaching philosophy that: a) elicits in all students, no matter what their talents as individuals, full development as human beings, b) prepares the student to participate intelligently, morally and effectively in the public arena, c) develops students to be conscientious, compassionate and committed "to seek a newer world" and be agents of transformation for good, now and in the future.

The contexts for personal growth relates to specific psychological topics. For example, the working with emotional pain lecture defines the following phases: a) Embracing pain and letting pain be pain, b) Journeying with pain, c) Letting go of pain and using it, d) Deriving the benefits of Pain: energy. The Preston text also discusses how to heal and recover from life's difficult problems. Overall, the course creates opportunities for students to expand themselves and experience personal growth in both the cognitive and affective domains.

4.6 Promoting Student Self-Assessment Using Questionnaires and Checklists

Self-assessment is built into every aspect of the class to foster introspection and personal insight including the needs assessment mentioned earlier and the self-expectancies discussion in Module 1. Students also take the Psychological Violence Checklist and the Gender Role Journey Scale [21] and also assess their skills in with working with pain and the forgiveness process. As mentioned earlier, 17 self quizzes, the midterm and final exams, and the course evaluations are used to help students assess themselves academically and personally. These assessment processes help students learn about themselves and provide the psychoeducator with knowledge about how students are doing academically and emotionally.

4.7 Stimulus Diversity with Media, Lectures, Assignments, and Self-Reflection Experiences

Stimulus diversity is defined as employing sequential and alternating teaching interventions to stimulate personal feelings, thoughts, and self exploration. The instructional goals of stimulus diversity is to touch as many of the students' senses as possible (listening, observing, writing, reflecting, thinking, feeling, smelling, doing, touching) and

promote analysis and synthesis of major concepts in both the cognitive and affective domains. Stimulus diversity includes establishing the sequential order of selected stimuli to maximize personalization of the concept taught. Stimulus diversity techniques focus student attention, help learners personalize the content, mediate resistance and defensiveness, elicit emotional reactions, regulate class intensity, and promote analyses from divergent perspectives. Stimulus diversity dominates EPSY 3333 by promoting the psychosocial growth of students using psychoeducational principles.

Instructional stimuli used by the psychoeducator include: movie clips, music and music videos, lectures, checklists, personal disclosures and examples, small group or dyad activities, reflection periods, storytelling, silences, humor, quizzes, exams, and feedback from the instructor. An example of stimulus diversity could be a brief lecture followed by a self- assessment experience, progressing to period of reflection or group discussion, and then a musical recording or movie clip emphasizing the same content in a moving or humorous way. After these stimuli, the students might be asked how the process influenced them conceptually, emotionally, and personally through a discussion or writing assignment.

The selective use of media can energize the online environment, deepen the course concepts, and complement the video lectures, assignments, discussions, and self-assessments. EPSY 3333 uses 9 music videos, movie clips, or audio recordings to promote learning. For example, music has been underestimated as a classroom stimulus to activate learning and foster community. Gandhi used music to quiet the masses and bring focus to his non-violence movement. Carefully selected media can focus students and elicit deeper cognitive and affective insights into course concepts. The challenge is providing contexts for the media that are understood and entertaining. Good teaching should be enjoyable without compromising academic rigor and students should leave class thinking and feeling about the concepts and themselves. For example in EPSY 3333, Luther Vandross's "Dance With My Father" music video powerfully communicates the universal issues of loss and Jack Nicholson's performance in "About Schmdit"demonstrates the active process of forgiveness. Bruce Springsteen's music video "The River" about poverty and classism is a riveting and his personal disclosures about father-son conflicts and reconciliation connect students to their own unresolved family issues.

4.8 Defining Resistance, Conflict, and Defensiveness for Students

New learning and psychoeducational processes are not always a "breeze" and sometimes cause resistance and defensiveness. Working with the class' resistance and defensive are very important parts of psychoeducational process because threat and intense emotions can occur as the class addresses topics like psychological violence, emotional pain, forgiveness, and the gender role journey. Tracking defensive is critical in this kind of course, especially with students who have been victims or emotionally wounded.

To mediate defensiveness, I give a lecture on defenses; both how they are functional and also how they can prohibit personal growth. The goal of this lecture is to help students work with their defenses during the course. I also disclose my own defensive processes to model the introspection and deeper emotional processes that I want students to actualize during the course.

4.9 Providing Feedback Promoting Risk Taking, Action, and Personal Transformation

One of the critical psychoeducational processes is providing students individual feedback on the four assignments related to psychological violence, personal pain, forgiveness, and the personal problem solving paper. Feedback from peers and the professor on the 9 discussion postings also gives students support for risk taking, making personal

change, and telling truth about their lives. Providing feedback is labor intensive for the professor but for the students it is the kind of support they need to take risks and make personal change. Students comment that that professor and peer feedback are the most important aspect of their psychoeducation.

4.10 Monitoring Students and Providing Care and Support

The psychoeducational process reach peaks when students assess their psychological violence, gender roles, emotional pain, forgiveness skills, and their personal problem. My role is to help students process these issues and turn their problems into growth experiences and positive action. This usually means giving students support to use their anger, loss, fear, and pain in constructive ways by labeling, journeying with, and ultimately letting go of pain to foster their growth. This support is given through detailed feedback on their assignment and discussion postings that discuss ways to heal and transform oneself. Some students have difficulty generating ways to let go of their pain, and need to be referred directly for advising, counseling and psychotherapy.

The 10 psychoeducational processes in **Figure 1** are the "nuts and bolts" of EPSY 3333 and represent how psycheducation is implemented with students. The critical question is how students respond to this kind of education and how they have evaluated the class process and its psychoeducational impact**.**

5. EVALUATION OF NINE SECTIONS OF EPSY 3333

5.1 Student Demographics

Undergraduate students from nine EPSY 3333 classes (n=203) at a large Northeastern university evaluated the course. The classes were taught over a three week period during winter intersession or summer school. The average size of the classes were 23 and 90 % of the student were junior or seniors. Ninety percent of the students were white, 80% were women, and a majority of the students had majors in the social sciences (psychology, education, sociology, family studies, *etc*.).

5.2 Analysis of the Evaluation Data for EPSY 3333

An exploratory and non-experimental design was employed that assessed students' reactions to EPSY 3333. During the initial course design, the *Instructional Impact Questionnaire (IIQ)* was developed as a self- report measure to evaluate how EPSY 3333 affects students during and at the end of the class. The 49 item IIQ uses a six point Likert scale of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Twenty of the IIQ items were chosen that best assessed the psychoeducational impact of the processes in **Figure 1**.The purpose of the questionnaire is to assess whether the psychoeducational strategies and processes made any difference with students. The 20 IIQ items assessed students' reaction to the course in four areas: a) effectiveness of teaching strategies, b) students' cognitive and affective processes during the class, c) personal actions or processes experienced during the class, and d) self- reported impact of the course. Students completed the IIQ online at the end of the course and their responses were not associated with their names or grades. Percentage agreement scores for each item were calculated by adding the fours (agree) and the fives (strongly agree) together into a single percentage agreement score for each IQQ item. Unequal and small numbers of students based on sex, race, sexual orientation, and grades levels made analysis across groups impossible and therefore just overall reaction to the course was the sole purpose of this evaluation.

6. RESULTS

Table 2 summarizes the percentage agreement results for selected items of the IQQ. The data is reported in the following areas: a) effects of teaching strategies, b) cognitive and affective processes reported in the class, c) personal action taken, d) self-reported impact. For teaching strategies, the students reported that the psychoeducational interventions were useful and helpful. The class assignments, quizzes, online discussions, video lectures, and selected media were evaluated positively by over 80% of the students. A similar pattern of responses were reported with the cognitive and affective processes. Over 80% of the students reported that the course helped them use their critical thinking and analytic skills and to synthesize knowledge. Seventy percent of students indicated that they had strong feelings when doing their online work and almost 40% reported that their defense mechanisms were activated.

Table 2.   Evaluation Data from EPSY 3333 Over Ten Courses In Four Evaluation Areas (N=203).

Effects of Teaching Strategies	Percent Agreement
1. The self assessment assignments done in course deepened my understanding of the course concepts.	86%
2. I found the self-quizzes in the course helpful.	82%
3. The course process and discussions were an important part of this course.	88%
4. The video lectures by the professor in this course were useful.	84%
5. The media (audio and video) used in this course helped me analyze the course concepts	85%
Cognitive and Affective Processes Reported In class	
6. I have used my critical thinking skills in this course.	90%
7. This course helped me use my analytic skills.	85%
8. This course helped me synthesize knowledge.	83%
9. My defense mechanism were activated by this course.	38%
10. I usually had strong feelings when doing my online work.	70%
Personal Action Taken	
11. I have been able to apply the course concepts to my life.	98%
12. I discussed with my friends how this course was personally impacting me.	65%
13. This course helped me take action with my life.	74%
14. This course has helped me take action with a personal trauma or victimization.	61%
Self-reported Impact	
15. My intellectual boundaries have been expanded by this course.	86%
16. My psychological boundaries have been expanded by this course.	90%
17. This course has increased my ability to introspect.	89%
18. This course was an experience in personal growth.	94%
19. This course has changed my life permanently.	69%
20. I am going to think about this course for a long time to come.	81%

In terms of personal action taken during the course, almost all of the students reported that they were able to apply the course concepts to their lives. Furthermore, almost 75% of the students reported that the course helped them take action with their lives and over 60% reported that course helped them take action with a trauma or victimization. Sixty-five percent of the students reported discussing the personal impact of the course with their friends. The evidence also indicates that the course had impact by expanding students' intellectual and psychological boundaries with 86% and 90% of students respectively reporting this expansion. Almost 90% of the students indicated the course increased their ability to introspect and over 90% indicated that EPSY 3333 was an experience in personal growth. Assessing impact over time, 68% of the students indicated that the course changed their lives permanently and over 80% reported that they were going to think about the course for a long time to come.

7. DISCUSSION

Teaching Introduction to Counseling and Psychoeducation online has been one of the most challenging and stimulating experiences of my career. Over the last 10 years that I have taught this course, I have learned much. My primary reason for experimenting with distance learning was to determine whether psychoeducation could be taught online. Could the psychoeducation effects witnessed in the regular classroom be replicated in the online learning environment? For the first time, data supports the position that psychoeducation can effectively be implemented online. The strength of the results is supported by the large number of students, across nine separate courses, who were taught psychoeducation using the processes in **Figure 1**.

The data suggests that students in EPSY 3333 report that aspects of the process paradigm (See **Figure 1**) were important in their learning. The evaluation data indicates that 5 of the 10 processes in **Figure 1** were rated highly by students (See number 3, 5, 6, 7, & 8 in **Figure 1**). High percentages of students agreed that their critical thinking skills, ability to synthesize knowledge, and problem solving skills were helped by EPSY 3333. The students also reported being able to apply the course concepts to their lives and take action. Additionally, the course was rated as an affective experience in personal growth with students reporting strong feelings and increases in introspection, and an expansion of their intellectual and psychological boundaries. Almost 40 % of the students were aware of defensiveness as they navigated the course modules. The self assessments assignments were also evaluated positively and deepened the learning experience for students. The students reported that the media and video lectures helped them analyze the course content and personalize the course. Maybe the most telling and the most surprising results were that a majority of the students indicated the course "permanently changed their lives" and that "they would think about the course for a long to come".

Even with data suggesting short-term impact, provocative and critical questions remain: Do psychoeducational teaching affect students over time? Does it really make a permanent difference in student's lives? Is it a superior pedagogical approach? These questions could be answered through extensive follow-up studies over 1-5 year periods. Further evaluation of online courses should assess how setting norms and expectancies, context setting, stimulus diversity techniques, and providing feedback and care to students, all affects students' learning and satisfaction with psychoeducation. Finally, more specific assessments are needed to determine how psychoeducation affects students during the actual classes and across diversity indices.

The results should be considered in the context of its limitations. The evaluation results were exploratory in nature and not designed to prove experimental effects of the course. The simple goal was to see if psychoeducation affects student and if so, how? An experimental design was not employed with this research and was considered premature but future experimental studies using randomized control procedures are recommended. Furthermore, the results are limited by not knowing how the class differentially affected students based on race, sex, sex orientation, grade level, and other diversity variables. Another limitation of the research was using self-report questionnaire that assessed the students' thoughts and feelings about the course. As always, the use of self-report questionnaires can be affected by social desirability and subjective responses, and therefore the positive results may be inflated.

My teaching experience over the years, using a psychoeducational approach, indicates that the classroom can be a place to make a difference in men's and women's lives. I hope this summary of my course stimulates further exploration from educators committed to teach online using psychoeducational processes.

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