

Popular Podagogy: Episode 4

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00:09 Nathan Cheney: Welcome to Popular Podagogy, a podcast brought to you by The Queen's University Faculty of Education. We've had a few interesting podcasts so far between researchers and other guests as far as our education podcast has gone so far. But today, we're trying something new, and we are bringing on a graduate student at the Faculty of Education. So I'm joined here today by Sawyer Hogenkamp. Sawyer, how are you doing today?

00:36 Sawyer Hogenkamp: A little sticky. But other than that, not too bad.

00:39 NC: Yeah. For those of you that are wondering out there, our podcast studio is quite warm, and it is quite warm outside. So we are getting a little bit hot and heavy in here, but that's okay. That's what the Popular Podagogy podcast is all about. So, Sawyer, we're gonna start off by talking a little bit about what it's like to be a Master's student. So a lot of people have a really tough choice when they leave university, and I know that I faced this too when I was leaving university, and I actually chose the opposite of, if they wanna continue their schooling, and if they wanna go into research. So what made you decide to go back to school and get your Master's degree?

01:17 SH: Yeah, so in... Well, I... A little background. So I did my undergraduate at University of Waterloo, and I always wanted to be a teacher. So right from high school, I planned it so that I could follow two passions. So I wanted to continue my piano studies and my music studies, and also my geography and environment studies. I majored in both at University of Waterloo and then picked the best education program in Ontario and for Queen's for the BA program.

01:51 NC: Again, we really love Queen's on this podcast, in case anyone out there was wondering.

01:56 SH: Yeah, it's okay, but I thought it was the best program [chuckle] when I first got in. But actually, it was great because I was in consecutive education, I snuck in to the one-year program. Anyways, I graduated with my teaching degree, and I spent a year looking for teaching work. And soon began to realize that, "Hey, maybe my passion isn't really teaching young kids. I really like my time teaching adults." So that was one thing that pushed me to graduate school. And the other thing was research. I had a lot of unanswered questions with teaching and education issues. And I thought, "Hey, why not go back to Queen's and join the graduate program?" So that's what brought me, and now I am here.

02:40 NC: This is a bit of a loaded question, so I'm gonna give you a second to think about it. But what have been the best and the worst parts of being a Master's student?

[chuckle]

02:52 SH: Well, a lot of it is... There is a duality for everything. So you could say, a best part is, "Oh, I have a pretty free schedule." But at the same time, you have to manage your own time. And if you fill it up, then you're not so free anymore. But I think the best part about being a graduate student is just being a part of that Queen's community. On West Campus, we're separated from Main Campus. So we see a lot of each other in the same building, and we're very fortunate that we have a work space in the same building. So there's about 40 or 50 desks allocated to graduate students, and there's sort of a community around there. So my favorite part about being a graduate student is participating in that community and helping and having fun with each other, definitely.

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03:43 NC: And what about the worst part of being a Master's student? You can be honest on this one.

03:47 SH: Well, the fact that we're not considered employees and we don't get those \$5 lunches on Fridays.

[chuckle]

03:54 NC: That is tough.

03:56 SH: The worse.

03:57 NC: I mean, it's a rough go. I'm not gonna rub it in. But I am an employee and the \$5 Friday lunches are quite fantastic and I can't wait to get them back. So we're gonna transition now a little bit. So you've previously appeared in the Queen's University Faculty of Education, Research in a Nutshell, or RIAN. And essentially, what that is, is a student publication on research that's happening within the Faculty of Education. Now, this is a really cool thing. If you're like me and you don't have a ton of time to be reading academic papers all the time but you kinda wanna keep up with things that are going on, it's nice for you to just get a bit of a Coles Notes version or a glimpse of what's happening as far as educational research. I kinda wish that more publications and more places did this. It's almost like getting a very easy to digest version of it. So now, I'm gonna put you on the spot. So in a nutshell, can you tell us what your research was about for that article?

05:07 SH: Sure. So for my Master's thesis or my research, I'm interested in bullying on school buses. And in particular, I'm interested in school bus drivers' perspectives of the issue.

05:22 NC: And what did you find from that research or what have you looked into from that so far?

05:28 SH: Well, I conducted the research with a survey, with follow-up interviews. So I surveyed bus drivers on their perceptions of bullying and then followed up with one-on-one interviews with bus drivers in Southern Ontario. And it was very interesting because bus drivers aren't really studied compared to teachers or administration, things like that, although a lot of students spend hours and hours each day on the school bus under a school bus driver's care. So for me, that was really interesting. And from talking to bus drivers, really, the main thing is that they feel like their voices aren't really being heard, in general. Now, sometimes, it's not even really the bullying, sometimes it's other things. But you can tell that they don't get a whole lot of advocacy compared to other professions within education. So that was a big theme right off the get-go that frames everything around the research.

06:33 NC: Awesome. And as you mentioned, you had spoke with school bus drivers quite a bit. Now, I'm harkening back to my days where I was visiting or when I was riding the school bus. And I know that my school bus drivers and the school bus drivers of other people were quite interesting characters. So did you get the chance to meet any interesting characters as you were completing your research? And do you maybe have any stories out of that?

07:00 SH: Sure, I can talk a little bit about my research. I feel like bus drivers have a stereotype over their heads. When you think of a bus driver, it's one of two things. You'll think of a stay-at-

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home mom that will do that for decades, or you think of an older retiree that's just doing it for extra income.

07:20 NC: Is it bad that I think of Otto from The Simpsons?

[laughter]

07:25 SH: Yeah, you know what? It's funny, that stereotype doesn't exist anymore.

07:29 NC: No, it's probably a good thing. I should hope that that is not what bus drivers are like.

07:33 SH: Yeah, I'm pretty sure most of the Ottos in the world have expired by now. [laughter]

07:36 NC: That's good.

07:38 SH: So they're pretty much done. But I did interview one fellow who reminded me of Otto a little bit 'cause he's really cool with the kids. [chuckle] But it's interesting because I interviewed these people and yes, many of them are retirees and lots of them are stay-at-home moms. But they all have different education backgrounds, so they all come from different life experiences. And really, they're all in the school bus profession because they care about kids, and they want to provide safe transportation to and from school. And it happens to fit within their life schedule. So, yeah.

08:14 SH: I remember when I was teaching that I would speak to the school bus driver often because I was at the school quite early, and so was she because she had to start her route from there. And she was definitely an interesting person. She had a very unique personality, but when it boiled down to things, she really cared about the kids. And everything that she was doing was out of interest of the kids and making sure that they were doing things. Now, whether she came back with that same opinion at the end of the day every single time, I'm not entirely sure because she could get quite frustrated. And some of our students didn't necessarily do everything that they were supposed to on the school bus.

08:51 NC: Well, that's putting it nicely.

08:52 SH: Yeah, I'm being very diplomatic here. But it was definitely something that you touched on, that it comes out of a position where they really care about the students. And that's something that's quite amazing, that we have that group of people that's not just there because it's convenient for them or their hours are there. They're there because they actually care.

09:14 NC: Yeah.

09:15 SH: And maybe to put a little more context to that, you think about a teacher and why a teacher would teach for 30, 40 years, it's because they care about kids. Then you think about, oh, maybe an educational assistant, who gets paid half or less that of the teacher while they're there, because they care about the kids. Then you think about, okay, a school bus driver that has to do all those things, but then drive a school bus at the same time with less pay, again, it's because they really love kids, and they really care. So it's really... They, again, a lot of them are interesting characters, and they... It's just... They do an amazing job. And it's really inspiring to talk to them.

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And that was my favorite part of the research.

10:00 NC: We're gonna transition back a little bit to Master's studies, and what it's like to be a Master's student. So one of the hardest things for many Master's students is determining the topic of their research. So what drew you to the school bus drivers, and how did that lead you to doing this research study? What made you want to get to that point?

10:21 SH: So it wasn't really an external source. When I applied to graduate school, I didn't really have this particular supervisor in mind or an expert in the field because I really wanted to study school bus drivers based on my own experience riding a school bus for 15 years as a child, and basically being left unsupervised and not really finding out a lot of empirical studies about that sort of experience. And that's because there really aren't a lot of experts in the field that look at school bus driving at an empirical level. So I didn't come to the Queen's for the expertise, but I did come to the Queen's because I already had... I realized as a Bachelor of Education student that they had a high emphasis on research, and they had faculty that had a lot of diverse areas of study. And I just felt like it was the type of community that could support what I wanted to do and support new ideas. That's what led me to continue to do the school bus study. When I'm talking to faculty about... Before I had settled on a supervisor, it feels like everyone I talked to about school buses, they all had a story about a school bus, whether or not they rode one as a kid or not, maybe as a parent or something. They always had a story, and their questions from the story never really had an answer because... So I really wanted to fill and help answer those questions they had.

11:54 NC: And then you took your research and then put it into a competition across Queen's called the Three-Minute Thesis. So can you tell us a little bit more about this competition?

12:05 SH: Yeah, so Three-Minute Thesis didn't start in Canada. It's actually, it started in Australia, and then I think it started maybe a decade ago. I may be wrong. But in a very short time, it spread internationally. So it's become quite popular in Canadian universities now. Three-Minute Thesis, so as the title suggests here, you have three minutes to talk about your research and you have to speak... Obviously, it's sort of like research in a nutshell, except in... Verbal, and then you have... And then, so you have to... And then, you're adjudicated. So it reminded me... I was drawn to it because as a child, I did those speech competitions.

12:50 NC: Right. That's what I immediately thought of when I read about it.

12:54 SH: Yeah, and I think the time limit for those was five minutes. So you have an 11-year-old, trying to cut it down to five minutes. [chuckle] Now, I have to cut it to three minutes and I have so much more to say. So that was incredibly challenging. It sounds very easy. "Oh, a three-minute thesis, I can bang that out in a couple of days," but it's incredibly difficult to get across everything you want to say in a meaningful, engaging way that has an impact.

13:23 NC: So what process did you take to get down to that three-minute mark? Because I imagine that would be quite difficult, like you said, to take such a large topic and so much information and pare it down so that you are really only getting the bare bones of it and then presenting that in a way that is still scholarly and academic. So what was the process that you went through there?

13:44 SH: Well, for me, and I use this process for teaching, and some people use it, some people don't. But I always think about my audience first. What does my audience need to know? What do

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they need to know? And how do I make sure they have an engaging time as a listener and as a learner? So right away... Now, this three-minute thesis is interdisciplinary. So you have not just education people, but molecular biology, math, cultural studies. So I realize, I'm talking to an audience without an educational background. So I have to spend a minute just talking to the audience to say, "Hey, bullying is bad." It takes about a minute to say that. And then that leaves me two minutes to talk about, okay, my research. And then another minute to talk about my findings, basically, and why it's important.

14:35 NC: And would you recommend other researchers try doing the three-minute thesis? Did you think that it was a valuable experience for you?

14:41 SH: It's very valuable. I would just caution, it is time-consuming. So if you do decide to do the three-minute thesis, you have to put aside... You have to pause your research, basically. So we had Dr. Lee Airton, who you interviewed on your first episode. She took the initiative and had a practice session. So I spent about a week preparing for the practice session at Education, and then it took me another week to prepare for the competition. And then the following week was the... I was lucky enough to proceed to the finals, so another week to polish it for the finals. So as far as my research goes, it took me about three weeks of practicing and writing. Most of it was writing, for me, and the last 20% presenting. For other people, it might be more presenting than writing. It depends on what your strengths are.

15:36 NC: Right.

15:38 SH: The other thing with Three-Minute Thesis is that you get to put up a slide, so you have a visual, but it's static. You have one slide. So you need to talk for three minutes, and you only have one slide. So you also have to figure out how you're going to play or parry off your slide, but not have it be too distracting or that sort of thing. So you have that audio and visual element going on at the same time. So really, it's a lot packed into three minutes.

16:07 NC: Yeah, it's a lot of work and a lot more than people probably appreciate when they actually just look at it and say, "Oh, it's three minutes. You can figure it out."

16:15 SH: Yes. But when you actually go and show up and watch these presentations, especially in the final round at Queen's, they all will blow you out of the water. They're all fantastic. They're all polished. I think, this year especially. I did attend the year before. And in the course of one year, I think they've had way more participants. And I imagine they will keep growing. It's a lot of fun, and I definitely recommend it for anyone who has... At any stage of their research, even if they're not finished, you can still talk about it for three minutes.

16:47 NC: Right. So we're gonna ask one more question before we go to a bit of a break here. As I talked about with you before we started the podcast, actually, I'm starting my Master's in the fall. So for those of you out there that are like me and you're looking to start your Master's or you are starting your Master's, what advice would you give to someone who's in that position?

17:09 SH: Sure, so if you're... You're gonna start your Master's in September, yeah?

17:13 NC: Yeah.

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17:13 SH: Okay. So right away, for the first couple of months, actually take your time, and don't think you have to hit the ground running. You need to get familiar with what class is like and what the program is like. And start talking to different faculty members. Ideally, you might have an idea for your research, but that might not be the thing you end up doing for your thesis. So that's an opportunity to bounce ideas off of people and figure out yourself. Because if you haven't had a lot of experience doing research or academic writing, you might find that what you really had in your head isn't really working on paper and you might discover that, "Oh, my strength is in another area. Maybe I should follow that path." So really, for the first semester or the first couple of months, it's all about finding yourself. And then after that, you're gonna branch off and do your own thing.

18:13 NC: Right. Well, I'll definitely keep that in mind when I'm starting this fall. And you heard it, Candace. I get to take it slow now. So I don't have to rush in anything. I don't have to do anything fast. No more putting pressure on me, okay? Yeah, that's the way this is gonna be.

18:28 SH: Good thing Candace isn't mic'ed because... [laughter]

18:30 NC: Yeah, there's some choice words going on behind me.

18:33 SH: Yeah. [laughter]

18:34 NC: On that note, we'll be right back after a word from our sponsors.

[music]

18:42 NC: Are you a professional looking to upgrade your skills in a flexible online environment? Are you looking to further your career options or try your hand at something new? Queen's Professional Studies offers low-cost, online courses created with the working professional in mind. You can build your skills as an editor with a Professional Editing Standards Certificate or work towards a Certificate for International Education Professionals, where you can learn how to develop international programs within the education sector in this increasingly globalized world. Don't have a university degree? No problem. Our courses are designed to be open and accessible to any educational background. For more information, check out professionalstudies.educ.queensu.ca. That's professionalstudies.educ.queensu.ca for more information and to sign up, now.

19:39 NC: Welcome back to Popular Podagogy. We're here with Sawyer Hogenkamp, and we're going to get into our Classroom Confession. So if this is your first time tuning in to Popular Podagogy, what we do with our Classroom Confession is we have our guests give a confession about something that either themselves or a student has done in the classroom. We know that teachers all have very funny stories, and we want to share them so that other teachers can feel our pain. If you would like to send in your Classroom Confession, you can do so to our email, popular.podagogy@queensu.ca. That's popular.podagogy P-O-D-A-G-O-G-Y @queensu.ca. Now, for this edition of Classroom Confession, for Sawyer, because he's doing his research on the school bus and because school bus stories are, frankly, hilarious, we have decided to ask Sawyer if you rode a school bus when you were growing up? And if so, do you have a Classroom Confession that you can share about a story from the school bus?

20:54 SH: A rolling classroom.

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[laughter]

21:00 SH: Actually, they're being... They're called... Anyway, that's a side story. I have too many stories. Now, they're all coming at the same time, but...

21:05 NC: It's okay.

21:05 Speaker 3: You can have more than one.

21:05 SH: Okay, okay. I'll start... Let's see. How about... So this is from when I was a child riding a school bus. So I rode a school bus from kindergarten right up to grade 12. The longest route I had was almost an hour one way. So I spent a lot of good quality time on the bus. [chuckle] In grade seven, so I would've been 12 going on 13 or so, I got in trouble for bringing a ballistic weapon on the bus. I think that can be my confession.

21:39 NC: No, details, please. What were you thinking, and why did you do this?

21:43 SH: [chuckle] So in grade seven science, in the curriculum, it's about pneumatics. So, of course, I, as a boy, I have the bright idea: "Okay, I really wanna launch a projectile as far as I can using air." So I hop on the dial-up internet, and I find some old paint schematics of people designing potato cannons. A potato cannon typically, you might use a barbecue lighter and some lighter fluid, and then you pop a potato down the chamber or the big long tube.

22:18 NC: I may or may not have used one before. [laughter]

22:20 SH: Yeah, yeah. So that's your typical one. However, there was a pneumatic design where below the chamber, you'll have an air chamber and you pressurize it with an air pump for a car. So my father and I collaborated on this particular project. It was within his interest as well [chuckle] to see how this turned out. And this all had the okay by the science teacher at the time and because I wasn't... [chuckle] Of course, I needed to make sure that I'm allowed to bring it to school because that was my only problem is, "Can I demonstrate this at school?" And the grade seven science teacher at the time said, "Sure. We can bring it. We'll take it outside. It'll be fun." I don't think she realized the scope of [chuckle] my project.

23:10 SH: So long story short, I bring this air ballistic weapon on the bus, and I sit at the front. And my bus driver at the time, her eyes go wide and she says, "Oh, what's that?" And then I say, "Oh, it's just a potato cannon. But I'm gonna sit here, right here beside it, right behind you. [laughter] So you can monitor me." Little did I know, she gets on her cell phone while driving to the school. And then as soon as the bus stops, the vice principal immediately walks on the bus, grabs my arm and marches me to the principal's office. So I walked there, and there's the principal, my science teacher, and two OPP police officers. [chuckle]

24:02 NC: Oh, no.

24:03 SH: So I get to have a lovely pre-meeting before I can demonstrate my science project, so.

[laughter]

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24:11 NC: Well, if you're out there and you still take the school bus and you're, for some reason, allowed to listen to Popular Podagogy, please note that the spud gun is not allowed on the bus.

24:26 SH: Oh, the spud gun, yeah.

24:26 NC: The spud gun is not allowed on the bus.

24:26 SH: So I did... [chuckle] The science teacher tried to say that, "Hey, you shouldn't have brought that on the bus." And of course, "Well, I live in the country, this is how I get to school." And then the police officer, they inspected it and said, "This is air, right?" I said, "Yeah, it's air. It's not even pressurized. It's literally just empty tubes." And then the officer said, "Well, it looks really well-made, actually." [laughter]

24:52 NC: It's always good when you get an officer's approval. It's nice.

24:54 SH: Yeah. The officers liked it, but I couldn't demonstrate it and then had to get picked up on the way home. But yeah, that's just one of many school bus-related excitement.

25:05 NC: So I have a school bus story of my own. It's probably not as good as the spud gun, but I'm gonna give it a shot. So when I was in first grade, I was attending Princess Margaret Elementary School in Niagara Falls. And my friends and I had all sat towards the front of the bus 'cause when you're in first grade, that's what you do. And then we had some of the older students who were sitting a little bit further back. And so it was the beginning of December, and we were all getting pretty excited for Christmas. And we were all on the bus and we were talking about what Santa was going to bring us, and what was going to happen, and if we thought that Santa was gonna be able to make it to everyone's houses. And some of the students at the back of the bus just look up at us and say, "Hey, stupid. Santa's not real." And we all just kinda looked at him. We're like, "What are you talking about, Santa's not real? Santa's obviously real. How else would we get all of these gifts?" And he goes, "Hey, stupid. It was your parents."

26:06 NC: And we go, "Wait a minute. Santa's not real?" And then we all kinda talked about it. We talked to ourselves, and then we're like, "No, there's no way. He's not right." And then we kinda talked about this the next day and the next day. And then finally, our grade one minds finally wrapped around the idea that Santa wasn't real. And we had talked about it with the student again. We're like, "Are you sure? There's gotta be a way where he makes it around, and it's just, obviously it's magic. It makes sense. It's the..." And he goes, "No, it's your parents. You gotta clue into this." And so, the worst part about it was that I was a grade one student. My parents still fully thought I believed that Santa was real, and I had to play into this lie for years afterwards. And so every single time I got a gift, I would go, "Thanks, Santa." And every single year, until finally, I could give up the facade because I was old enough and I knew that Santa was actually not real and my parents could admit it, as well. So yeah, the school bus destroyed my Santa dream. So not quite as exciting as getting pulled over by the OPP, but that's the way things go.

27:17 SH: Yeah. Well, it's funny because when you're young and you're mixed with older kids, there's sort of a weird dynamic that you don't normally get.

27:25 NC: Oh, yes. I learned...

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27:25 SH: You're trapped together. [chuckle]

27:26 NC: I learned many things that I will also not share on the school bus, but that's another story for another day. And on that note, that's gonna do it for another episode of Popular Podagogy. Before we go, I'm just gonna give... Sawyer, do you have anything that you want to plug? I know you've got quite the famous LinkedIn profile.

27:47 SH: [chuckle] No, as a young Master's student, I'm still working on publishing and disseminating my research. So nothing to plug just yet, especially depending on when you're listening to me, things will be changing and be in flux. In the meantime, if you're looking at anything school bus related, see if my name's beside it. I'll probably still be working on it.

28:10 NC: And if you're interested in seeing specifically the information that we're talking about on this podcast, you can go and look at it on Research in a Nutshell, which is available through the Faculty of Education website at Queen's University. And if you like what you're hearing on the Popular Podagogy podcast, make sure that you review and subscribe. We're available on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher, the Faculty of Education website, and the CFRC website. We welcome all reviews, especially the positive ones, and we also would love to see you subscribe. Thank you for listening and we'll see you next time.

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