

A 'Creative Falsehood' Learning Strategem.

Is it ever ethical, acceptable effective or beneficial to lie to your students as part of their learning process?

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Some years [2006] ago whilst leading an extended physical Geography Field trip after a lengthy minibus journey to North Wales, I was inspired to attempt a new approach in my fieldwork teaching hopefully to energize enliven, or provoke my students into discussion. My goal was to encourage my students to argue with me and disagree with their tutor { hopefully being 1st year students encouraging them only to accept explanations/assertions after well argued justification [not accepting someone's view as 'gospel truth' without reasoned questioning and reflection] i.e. to be critical and reflective of statements before total acceptance}.

My method was one of proposing 'alternative' 'striking' explanations for the field phenomenon which we were examining. In doing this I created a 'fake' or false misrepresentation of the landscape.. I had begun to 'seed' the idea of this falsehood before arrival at the field site and during the ensuing presentation /discussion of the field site I continued to elaborate the falsehood with what seemed to me increasingly implausible explanations/interpretations ; whilst attempting to justify this false explanation with apparent 'facts' or 'observations' { For those that know the Nant Ffrancon Glacial valley in North Wales; I was attempting to suggest that the Nant Ffrancon Roche Moutonnée was in fact 'The internationally significant "Nant Ffrancon Meteorite" {After student's eyebrows began to twitch I realized that my approach was working and a barrage of critical 'field-observation based arguments against my 'theory' were vociferously turned back at me by the students . The Students as a group and later as individuals were standing up for their 'reason'. Of course before we left the site I corrected the falsehood and we went on to discuss the 'true explanation' of the environment. I have called this approach 'The Creative Falsehood Learning Strategem' and my biased anecdotal assessment was that it was one that worked well and did indeed encourage the students to question their tutor; to engage actively in discussion and to think 'on the hoof' for themselves; I would very much like to hear if any one has employed or experienced a similar or related approach in their teaching/education and in what context and with what success. I would be delighted too



to receive views on the principle of this approach, effectiveness, validity & ethics etc.