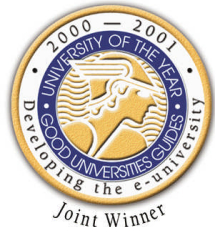




Promoting lifelong learning partnerships, pathways and andragogies:

Issues in evaluating and
redesigning the post compulsory
teacher education professional
experience at the University of
Southern Queensland

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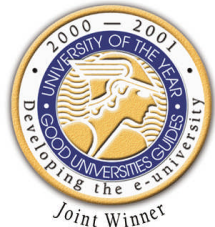




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Paper presented at the 4th International
Lifelong Learning Conference,
Rydgcs Capricorn International Resort,
Yeppoon, 14 June 2006

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***Struggling for Purchase*¹: Situating Further Education and Training (FET) within the Faculty of Education at USQ**

- Using a reflective (Schon) and reflexive (Usher) dialectic
- Drawing on the lenses of Critical Theory (Habermas), Criticality (Barnett), and the Humanist tradition in education (Dewey)
- Exploring the relationship between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education within the Faculty of Education at USQ

1. Arden, Danaher & Tyler (2005)



The problem of professional education - framing the 'practice problem'

- The 'problem' of the Further Education and Training (FET) practicum
- Seen through the lens of the *'reflective and reflexive practitioner'*
- Becomes the *'practice problem'* (Usher, 1987)
- and hence, the focus of this paper - *"...evaluating and redesigning the postcompulsory teacher education professional experience..."*

An evaluative perspective

...again using the lenses of *criticality*, *critical theory* and the *humanist tradition* in education, to:

- Identify, reflect on, ‘tease out’ and ‘theory test’ the ‘practice problem’
- Question the ‘normality’ of our practice
- In order to ‘re-map’ our future courses of action
- To ensure the continued rigour, coherence and relevance of our curriculum and andragogies to the needs of lifelong learners.

Usher, 1987



An evaluative perspective

- What are the implications of this evaluation in relation to the promotion of lifelong learning partnerships, pathways and andragogies in the FET practicum?



CRITICALITY AND THE BEST PE AT USQ

Ronald Barnett's (1997) quotation: "A durable self can only be sustained...through critical self-reflection and authentic – and, thereby, critical – action" (p. 63).

Three levels of critical thinking

1. A set of cognitive skills used in problem-solving
2. Critical thought.
3. Critical thinking as a critique or metacriticism

Thus critical thinking is more than reasoning skills; it is 'criticality', as it translocates itself within the domains of reason, self and the world.



As a lifelong learner you need the capacity to sustain and endure and that criticality bolsters this position

It is transformative in the sense that it an individual beyond the position of passive acceptance and taken for grantedness

Barnett (1997) suggests that critical spirit is the essence of the critical person

Dispositions:

- Independence of Mind
- Open-mindedness
- Whole heartedness
- Intellectual Responsibility
- Respect for others (Oxman-Michelli, 1992)



To what degree does the PE provide opportunities to exercise critical thinking?

To what degree does the PE prompt critical self-reflection and engagement in critical action?

In what way are students encouraged to question current practices within learning institutions?

How might students go about effecting change and how might they know whether such change is appropriate?

In what ways does the PE engender critical spirit in students?

In answering these questions the metal of the PE in the BEFT will be tested in relation to its alignment with criticality



CRITICAL THEORY AND THE BEST PRACTICE USQ

- Focus on Habermas's three types of interests: technical, practical and emancipatory
- These interests encapsulate some of the shared and contradictory factors and forces influencing PE in fet/VET
- These interests also articulate with lifelong learning partners, pathways and andragogies



- Technical interests are rational and controlling and in the domain of managers
- Practical interests are linked with knowledge, meaning-making and mutual understanding and in the domain of teachers and learners
- Emancipatory interests are linked with self-theories and using knowledge to share power over human activity and in the domain of learners



- All three interests underpin PE, but not necessarily in consonant or mutually enabling ways
- The three interests also link with an paper at the 2002 conference about a different fet/VET suite of programs, where the focus was on on the intersections among language, culture and power
- Within the PE at USQ, time and funding scarcity might promote technical and managerial interests; yet we are also committed to practical and emancipatory interests (eg, by making explicit and if necessary subverting the links among language, culture and power)



THE HUMANIST TRADITION AND THE FET PRACTICUM AT USQ

The humanist lens provided by Dewey (1916, 1938):

- lends itself particularly well to an evaluation of the extent to which current andragogies and practices foster partnerships which in turn help learners forge pathways that serve to enrich their lives through ongoing learning
- Provides the author as evaluator of the teaching field placement – or practicum – with a strong conceptual framework that employs lifelong learning partnerships, pathways and andragogies as its terms of reference



Deweyon lifelong learning

“the inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling”

(cited in Bowen & Hobson, 1987, p 180)



Deweyon lifelong learning partnerships and pathways

Education is growth and development, human experience the foundation platform of learning and shared, social or conjoint activity its realisation

(Bowen & Hobson, 1987, pp 167-168, 197)



Deweyon 'pedagogies' for lifelong learning

Dewey advocated for a type of teaching that considers the direct relationship between knowledge and activity – the “organic connection between education and personal experience” that “amid all uncertainties” provides “one permanent frame of reference” .

He maintained that scholarship or mastered subject matter that is not grounded in the learner’s own experience may actually serve to impede effective learning.

(Dewey, 1938, p 25 cited in Bowen and Hobson, 1987, p 168)



‘Deweyian’ andragogies

- Adopt experiential and experimental approaches that
- foster development of beginning teachers as self-directed, adult learners and reflective practitioners
- who make connections between theory and practice and
- engage in an ongoing process of critical enquiry.



'Deweyian' perspectives on vocational andragogy

- The starting point for curriculum development for adult educators needs to be those theories which guide and inhere in practice – ***practice problems*** (Usher, 1987)
- Not tied to any particular educational theory, but with '**appropriateness**' and '**constructive alignment**' as key guiding principles (Chappell, 2003)
- The importance of ***praxis*** that is the connection of learning with real life situations (Boud, Chen & Walker, 1993)
- **Mutual enhancement through integrated learning**, where the more formal knowledge gained through study towards a qualification is used to enhance the quality of ongoing informal learning in the workplace (Eraut, 2002, cited in Lindell & Stengstrom, 2004)



Implications for our practice

- **Field placement – practicum – as the central, focal point of curriculum development**
- **Emphasis on the ‘enacted curriculum’ vs curriculum as planned program of ‘subject matter and scholarship’**
- **Curriculum developers challenged to make the link between institution–based and work based, situated learning**
- **This is our own *practice problem!***



Implications for our practice

The answer lies in our ability to foster and make use of *lifelong learning partnerships*:

- Among the student teacher, his or her mentor teacher and the university
- Among students as lifelong learners
- Among university staff as lifelong learners

Partnerships provide the scaffolding that bridges the gap between institution-based and work-based learning (between theory and practice)



Keyevaluation questions

To what extent and how well do the institution's structures, programs, processes and practices...

- **Recognise the importance of these partnerships to the success of the learner's pathway?**
- **Facilitate or impede opportunities for 'mutual enhancement', where each partner serves to benefit from the arrangement as an opportunity for her or his own lifelong learning?**
- **Provide opportunities for partners to participate in learning communities that can serve to enrich further their learning experience?**