



REFLECTIONS ON THE TEACHER-PRACTITIONER: PREPARATION FOR DISCOVERY

AN ARTSWORK STAFF DEVELOPMENT EVENT HELD ON TUESDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2008,
BATH SPA UNIVERSITY

Aim:

This staff development event was designed for HEI teacher-practitioners from the creative industries. It aimed to focus on the role of the teacher-practitioner within entrepreneurial learning and teaching and to stimulate individual teachers to reflect on their teaching and practice, in relation to conditions such as change and risk. The event focused on discussion and participation.

Outcomes:

Participants, when asked to reflect on the day, described thoughts on how they might integrate or value practice in their teaching better, invest in and challenge themselves more, and incorporate risk and innovation into their teaching practice and the learning experience of the student.

Participants were asked to represent their identity or the relationship between teaching and practice, through a drawing or diagram. Analysis of these drawings revealed that just over half [20] of the participants saw teaching and practice as reciprocal. About 30% indicated that teaching and practice were separate or that teaching informed practice. Less than 30% 'put themselves' in the centre, or in-between teaching and practice.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TEACHER-PRACTITIONER:

Can we be more articulate about the tacit knowledge we bring to practice and so to teaching, so that we can describe the model of the Teacher-Practitioner [TP]?

If we can describe the Teacher-Practitioner, then perhaps we can describe something that is of value, precisely because of its difference, in order to challenge conventions of teaching?

History V Current:

- ☞ Historically, in some disciplines such as Art, Design, Music and Theatre, the curriculum, the institution, and its delivery were mostly run by and for industry. The dichotomy of academia and industry is a relatively recent development.
- ☞ It is suggested that [in Performing Arts] 15/20 years ago most permanent teachers would have come from industry. Now days with the academic route and teaching qualification more teachers maybe teaching about practice without actually having had practitioner experience.
- ☞ It is suggested that with more practitioners in teaching, practitioners are expected to take on more administrative/managerial roles – therefore need to have traditional academic qualifications to hold these positions
- ☞ It is suggested that TPs do not get involved with curriculum development or implement change through management as the majority may be part time.
- ☞ In some disciplines, e.g. Engineering, it has been taken for granted that what TPs found out in industry, would be brought into the classroom so that students could work on real problems.
- ☞ Due to work based learning, there is no longer a clear dividing line between the classroom and the 'real world'.
- ☞ Agencies, such as Sector Skills Councils, see TPs as becoming involved in education in order to deliver specific things such as better skills in the workforce, enhanced employability and as being instrumental to this.

Identity of the Teacher Practitioner [TP]:

- ☞ All teachers have a practice which are bounded by sets of orthodoxies and conventions
- ☞ The TP has the ability and confidence to exploit what is encountered in the every day of artistic/creative practice. How do students benefit from this?
- ☞ Practice is full of tacit knowledge and practitioners cannot describe what they do easily.
- ☞ It is suggested that TPs lose the values and qualities of 'otherness' that they bring with them in terms of industry conventions, and adopt academic conventions quickly, thus potentially reducing the value of their industry perspective for students

Community of Practice:

- TPs belong to more than one community of practice and students are expected to become members of both creative and academic communities of practice - but some of these practices are very different and there may be some conflict.
- Are TPs playing a 'game' of conformity? Have they developed an expertise at writing criteria, curriculum etc. [academic convention] in order to pursue what they want to do [creative practice]?
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Staff development

- Does the fact that there is such a high number of people from industry, teaching in education, provide an opportunity for life long learning?
- There is a claim that teaching does affect practice 'outside' of HE, because TPs carry on learning, have opportunities and feed ideas from students and colleagues back into their work. If this is so, is industry benefiting from the TP?
- The high numbers of TPs positively indicates institutional resources and support to facilitate people from industry engaging in teaching, through employment & staff development practice.

Learning and Teaching

- At what point does practice inform teaching? It is difficult to separate the two, and there is a supposed symbiotic relationship with each other - but in what way do they inform each other?
- The Visiting Practitioner model maintains the distance and 'exoticism' of practitioner contribution - different for students, but this model does not affect structural or curriculum change.
- Who provides the model of the 'real' nature of the creative arts - application, repetition etc - as opposed to the student perception of the creative industries as defined through innovation, originality etc?
- There is a role for transmission where a part-timer comes in from the industry and students value these individuals because of the transmission of craft, technique
- Learning from practitioners also evolves out of the discussion or situation, as the learner adopts or responds and forms a position
- The value of the creative artist and a genuine intellectual or creative interest in the practitioner art form may be in danger of being replaced by students, in favour of industrial imperatives such as how to make a living, acquisition of industry contacts etc.

The relationship between [subject] knowledge and [industry] experience

It is of particular interest that when groups of participants were asked to define the attributes of the teacher, the terms knowledge and experience were often used interchangeably, equating industry/sector experience to discipline knowledge, usually on an either/or basis, although two groups suggest that knowledge *and* experience is necessary to be a teacher. Four groups out of the seven refer specifically to sector or industry contexts. Given some of the discussions around the teacher-practitioner about the 'academisation' of practice, it seems that being explicit about the value of subject experience may be central to the practice to teaching.

Reputation in **sector**/discipline

Industry insight/knowledge

Experience/knowledge of the discipline

Subject knowledge *and* a **portfolio** of successful creative work

Experiential knowledge

Specialist knowledge *and* experience

Subject knowledge/**industry** experience

In addition, it is worth noting another attribute of the teacher the groups listed:

Imaginative, innovative, inventive

Role model

Original thinker, challenge convention/innovative

Open, vision

Investigative approach

Open to change

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