

Where is the praxis in practice-based education?

Dr Franziska Trede, *Deputy Director, The Education For Practice Institute, Charles Sturt University*
New South Wales, Australia

Practice-based education (PBE) is using strategies, content and goals that direct students' learning towards preparation for practice roles post graduation. One of PBE's goals is to enhance participation, meaning making, and reflection which together help students become aware and respond to the impact and consequences of their actions on others in practice. Such practice is morally, ethically and culturally committed and has been described as praxis (Kemmis and Trede, in press). Academics who teach in professional entry courses that prepare students for the world of practice might bring skills and expertise as practitioners or researchers but often do not have skills in facilitating transformative learning in their students which promotes praxis.

This paper reports on a strategy that aims to build capacity of university academics to enhance PBE with notions of praxis, namely the education for practice debates. The term debate was purposefully chosen to align its purpose with principles of critical pedagogy. These principles are: reason prevails over power, debaters take a self-reflective stance, and arguments need to be transparent and have intrinsic properties that help decide whether to accept or reject validity claims (Habermas, 1987). A critical perspective to debates promotes disclosure of interests, bias and motivation, rejects deriding rhetoric and unsubstantiated statements that lead to deception, and honours genuine transparent discussion.

In order to support an open, positive and creative online forum for discussion, participants were asked to:

- Maintain confidentiality
- Be as open as they can. Try to share critical moments that expose challenges, problems and errors that all can learn from. There is no pressure to be seen to succeed.
- Feel free to disagree and engage in vigorous debate, but treat other participants and their contributions respectfully
- Try to focus on problem-posing and exploring choices rather than immediately looking for solutions. This is a forum for learning and transforming, not teaching.
- Use the debate constructively for genuine professional development, not to simply manage frustrations.

This paper will briefly highlight the strengths of these debates but will predominantly focus on challenges and barriers to critical dialogues and enhancing praxis. Whilst participants in the education for practice debates were proficient in sharing their practices and critiquing own practices they were reluctant to challenge others and make changes. It was difficult to steer the debate towards a deeper discussion that involved questioning values and practices, and identifying ways to transform current practices. Although the debates raised awareness of the need to underpin education for practice with praxis it is yet to be seen how this awareness translates into action to foster praxis in PBE. This session will discuss transitions from practice to praxis.

REFERENCES

- Habermas J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action (Volume 1): Reason and the rationalization of society* (trans. T. McCarthy). Oxford: Polity Press.
- Kemmis S. and Trede F. (in press). Practice and developing future practice, in J. Higgs, D. Fish, I. Goulter, J. Reid, S. Loftus and F. Trede (eds) *Education for future practice*, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.