SYDNEY TEACHING COLLOQUIUM 2014

Practice example

From Novice to Expert: The Case for Legitimate Peripheral Participation

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Abstract

In this session, we draw the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) from cognitive anthropology, which argues that newcomers to a community of practice need opportunities to engage in simple, low-risk tasks. To illustrate this concept in higher education, we offer practice examples from the secondary education curriculum within the Faculty of Education and Social Work. It is vital that pre-service teachers engage in learning that is relevant to the disciplinary, professional, and community contexts (Korthagen et al, 2001). For that reason, they need diverse opportunities to engage in immersive teaching experiences that are low-stakes and school-based. Rather than assessing pre-service teachers directly on their teaching skills, we instead offer substantial formative feedback and assess their critical reflection and content knowledge. In the core unit Craft Knowledge and Professional Practices 1, students engage in teaching and observations in schools; allowing them to develop their pedagogy and extend their understanding of how educational theory is enacted in educational practice. Students are not assessed on these experiences, allowing them to develop their pedagogical practice without the risk of ‘failure’. In Drama Curriculum, students engage in group performances in class and team teach lessons in schools; this effectively scaffolds their learning and encourages them to critically reflect on their understanding of the links between theory and practice. In English Curriculum, students engage in a viva voce with their tutor; this reflexive practice offers them with substantial formative feedback on a major assessment task that involves the creation of a unit of work. Moreover, it is indicative of the practice that graduate teachers will undertake in the high school classroom. In closing, we will offer participants an opportunity to consider how the concept of legitimate peripheral participation applies to their discipline and can be fostered within their assessment tasks.

References


Theme

Assessment tasks, practices and processes designed to integrate student learning across units, and across disciplinary, community and professional contexts (theme 2)