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Exploring The Relationship Between Espoused Philosophies Of Teaching and Practice

Roisin Donnelly
Technological University Dublin, roisin.donnelly@dit.ie

Marian Fitzmaurice
Dublin Institute of Technology, marian.fitzmaurice@dit.ie

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Roisin Donnelly & Marian Fitzmaurice
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Context
'The dominant paradigm in academic development seemed to me,…..too often to emphasise the practice and perfection only of methods and techniques'
(Walker, 2001 p.5)

'My reservations about what I see as the most common form of staff developments come from their poor fit with my analysis of professional learning'.
(Knight, 2002 p.217)

- PG Certificate in Third Level Learning and Teaching
- 2000-04, 61 graduates
- Teaching Portfolios
- Why focus on Teaching Philosophies?
- Process of Developing a Philosophy Statement

How to work with academic staff?
The form of intervention that is best suited to encouraging changes in conceptions of teaching

The context which will encourage lecturers to use deep approaches to learning and teaching
(Ramsden, 1992)

Academic Development Role
Land (2001) identifies 12 orientations to the practice of academic development including:
- managerial
- entrepreneurial
- romantic
- vigilant opportunist
- reflective practitioner

Professional Knowledge:
- Content knowledge
- General pedagogical knowledge
- Curriculum knowledge
- Pedagogical content knowledge
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
- Knowledge of educational contexts
- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values and their philosophical and historical grounds

(Shulman, 1987. p.8)

Knight (2002, p.24) suggests that there is an additional type of knowledge to be added:
- Knowledge of self, including awareness of our own self theories, our preferred identities, the values we tend to act out, and our emotional drives and needs.

Teaching Philosophy Statements:
- Learn from a variety of different sources
- Importance of developing and interrogating personal knowledge about teaching
- Individual process
- Value in sharing knowledge and opening up thinking to peer comment

Research Question

Is the development and writing of a philosophy of teaching statement an intervention that encourages change in conceptions of teaching?

What is the role of subject disciplines in forming personal philosophy statements?

Research Study
- Interpretative
- Qualitative: 2 phases
- Retrospective
- Phase 1: Open-ended Questionnaire
- Phase 2: Microteaching Video Analysis

1. Prior to starting this course, did you ever have the opportunity to explore your teaching philosophy?

2. How did you begin writing your philosophy statement: what areas did you concentrate on first?

3. What were the core ideas that you explored when writing your teaching philosophy statement?

4. Did you discuss your philosophy statements with colleagues in your department?
   If, Yes, in what ways did this help?

5. How better could we have facilitated you during the process of writing of your teaching philosophy statements?

6. Following the composition of your teaching philosophy statement, what have been the benefits on how you now approach your teaching practice?

Findings

41 respondents from 4 disciplines

3 had explored their personal philosophies previously through professional practice:
   Early childhood education
   Adult educator
   Nursing

38 had never had the opportunity prior to this course, but some had implicitly been considering it

How to begin formation of a personal philosophy statement:

Social Science	Aims of HE; Personal core L&T values; Putting values into practice Begin with a central idea: 'learning as a journey' then addressed a range of issues including facilitating learning, encouraging development of critical thinking and application of theory to practice

Business	Considerations of what students are going to achieve
Science	Metaphor Consideration of how the teacher felt as a learner Class readings and discussions
Apprenticeship	Researched the area to understand, identify and prioritise How teacher was taught/Reflection on past learning How to prepare students for the workplace

Core ideas explored when writing statement

Social Science	My tutoring role The relationship between learning, teaching and research
Business	Wanted an individualistic statement Exploring different ways students learn
Science	Race's adaptation of Kolb's Cycle applied to lesson plans Learners will encounter a period of disequilibrium before they understand something and making allowances for that
Apprenticeship	Equality, integrity, honesty, quality Teaching strategies, curriculum design, student motivation, delivery methods Primarily preparing students for the workplace Respect for students, understanding 'engagement' of students in topics; I wanted to be able to say 'this is how I see the world'

Discussion of philosophy statements with colleagues

Social Science	Yes, helps to verbalise my beliefs during course committee meetings
Business	Only with fellow course participants, not colleagues in depts; assumed they weren't on the same wavelength

Science	No but great to get other ideas especially from the more experienced staff on the course who discussed methods that have provided a better learner center environment
Apprenticeship	Not initially even with fellow course participants; felt it was a very personal thing and was sensitive to criticism. The openness on the course helped develop a deeper understanding of points of view and understanding of own philosophies

How could facilitation have been improved?

Social Science	It is difficult if you have not studied philosophy in the past. Small group work or brainstorming ideas of what is involved. Also examples of other's philosophy statements Start writing from the beginning of the course
Business	If we had been asked to present very briefly on the teaching metaphor we had developed – this would provide feedback early on and I'd have heard how others were approaching writing their statement
Science	More verbal interaction with others in the group to explore what I had written
Apprenticeship	It would help by asking if the existence of a philosophy statement would affect one's lecturing practice or if the journey to defining a statement was the real benefit

Any benefits on how you now approach your teaching practice ?

Social Science	Have something to measure my practice against Useful tool for reflecting on my approach to learning and teaching
Business	Increased focus even more on the learner Brings me back to basic principles of teaching Made me much more interested in my

	own job Students also notice the difference in my style I would have involved my students directly in the process of writing it
Science	I am confident about my teaching/discussing with colleagues because I have thought about it and now know why I take the approach that I do Equipped to reflect on changes/new situations

Any benefits on how you now approach your teaching practice ?

Apprenticeship	Now teach with more care and compassion for students' learning needs I now know why I do this job More comfortable in the classroom Students require customized learning and from peers Set goals for improvement; approach classes in a more structured and thoughtful manner. Through reflection I am learning from my experiences I use a greater range of teaching methods and constantly evaluate outcomes

Implications for Learning and Teaching
- Increased confidence
- Improved range and use of teaching strategies
- Impact of reflection
- More student centred approach
- Better equipped to deal with change