

Impact of beliefs on learning | essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

CPPD

Introduction

Reflection has become a fundamental component of professional development of teachers and lecturers in the Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) sector (Harkin, 2005). The lifelong learning sector can be seen to transcend both these paradigms and contexts of post-compulsory learning. This essay addresses some key elements of reflecting upon the experience of a teacher in Beauty Therapy within the lifelong learning sector, addressing the intersection between the personal and experiential and the theoretical/pedagogical aspects of the role and its function.

Teaching roles and context within the lifelong learning sector

Teaching roles within the lifelong learning sector seem to be related to the kind of teaching, the kind of subject, and the kind of learner (Zukas, 2006), a three-way relationship which I have observed to be perhaps more negotiated upon a day to day basis than founded in one single pedagogical theory or framework. It is notable that within the lifelong learning sector, there seems to be a crossover between the vocational type of education, and more traditional 'teaching', and in particular, these roles of 'teachers' are very much based on how best to meet student needs. Therefore, it seems that one element of the teaching role within this context is related to learning 'on the job' or learning through doing (Eraut, 2004), and the 'becoming' element of the process of 'becoming' a teacher in this context is a response to the demands of the job, rather than a formal process which prepares you to carry out the role. While this might run against the theories of pedagogy, being a much more personal take on what the teaching role is, it is based on

perceptions of professional identity as well as an understanding of dominant concepts of the role in a formal sense (Beckett and Gough, 2004). Austerlitz and James (2008) describe the emotional journeys that students go through in further education as a process of cognition through which emotions help students to appraise situations and develop knowledge and understanding.

This may be an important perspective to consider within the lifelong learning sector, because of the range of types of students and types of subjects that are prevalent within this sector. There is no single student demographic, no single approach to pedagogy, no one-size-fits-all model of teaching and learning. Bathmaker and Avis (2005) carried out research into professional identity formation amongst trainee FE lecturers, and found that “ rather than identifying effective processes of increasing participation in existing communities of practice, a strong sense of marginalisation and alienation amongst trainees was observed” (p 47). Bathmaker and Avis (2005) suggest that this lack of engagement in communities of practice is “ detrimental both to trainees and experienced lecturers if they are to actively engage in building new forms of professionalism for the future” (p 47). I would draw from this the concept that formal training processes do not necessarily positively contribute to role formation, definition and professional identity, and that learning is much more experiential and interactive. Hagger et al (2008) support this view, and suggest that experiential learning dominates learning of this type.

Own teaching role and context within the lifelong learning sector

My own teaching role is to teach and support students to learn on two levels. The first is to learn the practical skills and abilities of the beauty therapy

<https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-beliefs-on-learning-essay/>

industry, so that they can become capable, effective practitioners. Beauty therapy is no 'soft option'. In fact, there is a great deal of precision, dexterity and deeper learning involved in acquiring the skills to function as a therapist. The second element of the learning is for students to develop knowledge and understanding of the body, of health, of individuals and their holistic wellbeing, in order to contextualise the activities that they carry out within their roles, and to be able to provide suitable treatments, therapies and the like to appropriate clients. The third element of the role is to support students to develop the communication and interaction skills necessary to be able to bring together knowledge and practical skill into their own 'professional role' and identity, and work effectively as a therapist within a team. My role within this setting is to 'teach', but also to facilitate learning, raise difficult issues, support students to resolve complex questions, and act as a role model. Part of my role is to assess practical activities, and then provide feedback so that students can learn from their experiences and learn to improve their own practice through reflection and evaluation (Edwards and Nicoll, 2006; Solomon et al, 2006). My role also involves becoming more aware of the impact of my role on the students, and attempt to be as good a 'teacher' as I can be. More and more, however, my role involves other activities, including administration, engaging in marketing and recruitment activities, and looking for new topics and curriculum developments (Chivers, 2006).

Impact of own beliefs, assumptions and behaviours on learners and others

My own beliefs about learning affect not only the learners who I interact with, but also their interactions with others, particularly clients. I believe that my

own actions, reflections, and the way I respond to emergent situations within the teaching context are likely to affect the students and how they learn as much as the formal, planned learning activities I provide for them. It is through reflection on my actions as a teacher that I have realised that reflection itself becomes a reflexive process, which changes the way I behave and react to students, which then changes their responses to me.

Austerlitz and James (2008) have developed a model which describes and captures PPD statements which are used in the further and higher education sectors (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 PPD Model (after Austerlitz and James, 2008).

A Dominant
emotion
which is
reported
(or
emotions)

B Cause of
the
emotion
(previous
expectatio
ns,
students'
goals,

behaviour

of others,

issues of

identity

etc)

Object/

focus of

concern of

C

the

emotional

response

Reported

D emotional

intensity.

The way

the

E. emotional

response

evolved.

Effects on

F aspects of

learning.

This model encompasses many of my own beliefs about the ways in which students interact with their learning processes, and in particular, how they respond to my teaching and learning activities. Every aspect of learning must have an emotional element, and to exclude this from pedagogical processes and theories is to overlook important aspects of how students learn and how they behave when applying that learning. Yet there is some evidence that current perceptions of teaching roles within the FE sector are also changing (Thompson and Robinson, 2008). I believe that the Austerlitz and James (2008) model could provide a means by which students could themselves identify the emotional elements of their learning and address this, through reflection, in proactive ways.

Impact of own professional, personal and interpersonal skills, including literacy, numeracy and ICT skills on learners and others.

I have used a range of teaching approaches, including some innovative use of ICTs, including using ICTs to make posters and mind maps, to encourage the application of new knowledge and exploration of complex situations. These have had a positive effect on some students who relate well to ICTs, particularly younger students, and have also helped students who are more visual learners. However, in relation to professionalism, I think it is my professional skills and experience which have positively impacted on students' development of awareness and understanding of the complex interactions between beauty therapist and client. The current social construction of beauty, particularly in relation to ageing, raises issues about client experiences and emotional/psychological wellbeing (Paulson, 2008; Radley, 2000). Students need to understand the emotions and thoughts

which underlie the desire that women have for the different kinds of beauty therapies, and be able to interact in a credible way with clients and meet their requests in appropriate ways. My own professionalism helps this because I set a good example, exemplify proper interactions, and support students to address often challenging issues such as intimacy, privacy, body-image and the like.

Conclusion

Overall, the most important aspect of my role as an educator is as a role model, and not simply as a role model of good communications behaviours or good practical skills, but as a questioning, reflective, responsibly practitioner, who sees clients as individuals, not just in relation to their treatments. It is important not to simply perpetuate traditional ways of working, but to question practice and the self in the professional context, and by acting as a reflective practitioner myself, I can encourage my students to develop similar skills and perhaps become better professionals because of it.

References

Austerlitz, N. and James, A. (2008) Reflections on emotional journeys: a new perspective for reading fashion students' PPD statements. *Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education* 6 (3) 209 – 219.

Chivers, G. (2006) The work roles and development needs of vocational lifelong learning professionals in British higher education. *Journal of European Industrial Training* 30 (3) 166-187.

Zukas, M. (2006) Pedagogic learning in the pedagogic workplace: educators' lifelong learning and learning futures. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* 2 (3) 71-80.