

From the 'Letter to a dead philosopher' to 'Back to the future'

Robyn Brandenburg-Jacqueline Z. Wilson (2013 Eds.): *Pedagogies for the Future. Leading Quality Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*. Sense Publishers, Rotterdam. A review by Julianna Mrazik

In case of considering the *paradigms* of competing paradigms of Pedagogy one can think at least of three possibilities: the development of so called 'hyphen-sciences' as Social-Pedagogy, Pedagogical-Philosophy; intentions to establish a so called 'crystal-clear' Theory of Education and devoiding, emptying of it. There are centuries behind these three and if we look at this row chronologically, now we are somewhere around the deflating paradigm because on one hand the previous two have sublimed the contents of autonomous pedagogy and on the other hand different sciences gave answers to the pedagogical questions.

The 12 papers and 140 pages of the volume titled '*Pedagogies for the Future*' argue against the deflating paradigm of Pedagogy which can be tangible through a 'Better Pedagogies' as *enhancing teaching-learning in higher education through critical conversations; pedagogical research and pedagogical innovation*. For better impact, a research group titled 'Better Pedagogies: Researching Learning and Teaching' has been established (**Robyn Brandenburg and Jacqueline Z. Wilson**, 1-3.).

Now, the origin of certain problems occurring in Pedagogy is fact that "teacher education is not a distinct discipline as such" so the knowledge about it systematized by "sophisticated approaches and practices". Well, if it is not science, then what is it? A special practice and knowledge about it, as well as it is an integrated multi-discipline. Sources of them are narratives, conversations, practice-orientedness or personal background, research methodology and philosophy – and all these resources mean one of the chapters of the volume. (2-3)

In one word: all kinds of it. From 'Letter to a dead philosopher' to 'Back to the future'

Everything but not: stereotypical approaches and perceptions of learning and teaching in higher education (3). An example: 'In education, most of the important issues come in the form of dilemmas to be managed, not problems to be solved.' as professor **John Loughran** stated in his paper '**Stepping out in style**', 5-11). By the way, it is obvious that Loughran, as a grand contemporary researcher of 'voices' (personal utterances) sees the possibility of solving the problems arising in higher education in observation of voices – of students. His suggestions can be described by *sharing learning* (learning outcomes and sharing learning communities as places); *confronting reality*, which means confronting stereotypes. This type of stereotypes, for example teachers' beliefs about teaching and students views about learning. These opposite views can be a major blocking factor in deeper learning –as Loughran warns us.

Giving the cue to Robyn Brandenburg's paper where the author suggests to 'examine our assumptions about students as they embark on and complete their degrees' (13) as to discover whether they are 'consumers, customers, clients (...) or active, engaged co-learners' (**Robyn Brandenburg: When their experience meets our**, 13-25). The paper precisely describes the way in which the author intended to understand students. The first step was the *background research teaching*, then reinforcement of term of 'reflective practice' and the next phase the examining the *learning and teaching context* of the University of Ballarat (UB). The utilized methodology for examining own practice was *self-study* 'which emerged from the reflective practice' (17). Interestingly, one of students' comment started the author on way studying self-practice, by

roundtable reflective inquiry (RRI), freewrites, tickets out of class and lecturer spot evaluations. How we do see our students? Both of us will behave that way...

Sue Emmett looks even earlier back. She describes her research where she has been examining Bolwby's attachment theory from point of view that whether the pre-service early childhood educators' understanding of attachment theory 'can be enhanced by a carefully designed education program which relates theoretical understanding to practice' and also are the pre-service early childhood educators 'able to put attachment theory into practice within an early childhood environment during professional experience placements'. She finds that students learn about this theory too early, their prior knowledge is shallow, in addition different language spoken both by the students and the theory, as well. However, well-designed environment helps a deeper understanding of the theory and practice-oriented application of it.

A special approach has arisen in **Fagan's, Brandenburg's and Crothers'** paper which is nothing else but a conversation about teaching-learning of indigenous students. Its specialty that the interview questions have been answered in a *visual way*: with her paintings. The conclusion 'different learners need different approaches to inspire and support them to learn' (47) is not a research novelty or a brand new invention but that way is undoubtedly original along with Fagan has reached it. She sees her successfulness of her learning in her human relations: *elders, places, connection* and as she says: 'No matter where I am, I stay in touch with my family' (42).

But let's step back to the hard science!

Sharon McDonough in her article **Learning to think like a teacher educator** (61-72) contemplates the three evergreen 'P's: Pedagogy, Practice, and the designed Performance and there are also evergreen issues for teacher trainers, too. These issues are: 'How do my assumptions about teaching and learning mediate my pedagogy and practice as teacher educator' and 'What tensions do I experience in my practice and how these tensions impact on my pedagogy' (61) Certain serious allegations were cited from the literature that 'Quality pre-service programs have been identified as a feature of high-performing education system' (62) so therefore the raising of primary role of the teacher educators and the quality of teaching is the central problem. So, the practice has necessarily to be problematized. It is necessary to identify all devices from which the students 'move beyond a how-to toolkit for teaching to an approach which encourages them to become reflective practitioners' (63) The article reports about *becoming* a teacher educator, bearing in mind that all of these are associated with many tensions and through analyses of these tensions (self-study) we can get the solution. There are two new directives are offered by the author: the 'thinking aloud' about the pedagogical practice and 'learning through situated Performances'.

In her paper, **Amanda McGraw, Layered stories as opportunities to show and engage in learning** (73-84) expresses that she is more interested in 'processes than products' in learning and in pedagogy and rather investigates 'complex interconnections between thinking, language and people within learning contexts'. However, it is not easy, because we live in such policy environment, where 'teaching standards, evidence-based practice, performance reviews and rigid notions of quality are emphasized, we are led to believe that teaching, as a practice, can be clearly defined, measured and taught'. So it is hard enough to navigate in such world. She is rather familiar with the sentence 'learning is a conscious search for some kind of coherence, some kind of sense.' The reference to 'layers' in the title of the paper indicates those diverse layers all elements of which are saturated

with valuable content and which can lead to understanding learning and from which learning remains 'so vital and influential' (83)

Amanda Mooney and **Loris Gullock** in their paper "**Back to the future**" **Building mentoring capacity in physical education teacher education students** (85-98) indicate the fact that 'Physical Education has not received more attention by academic researchers' (85) and on the base of this deficiency, they have developed and tested a form of assessment for students of Physical Education, where mentoring is given by significant role. The outcome: 'I found this assessment task highly rewarding as it felt like I was contributing to the learning of future teachers' (96) as one of participants assumed.

Jane Mummery's article on **Students' beliefs regarding philosophical study and their development as critical thinkers** (99-109) deals with development of critical thinking of philosophy students but as the author writes the purpose (...) to present - students' own beliefs regarding their development as critical thinkers in the context of their studies in philosophy' (99) instead of presenting the necessity of these skills or way to acquire them by students. The form of this qualitative research was analyzes of feedbacks, teaching evaluations and self-reports received from students. As the author writes, the conditions of the research does not allow string conclusion. But it is a challenging trial to prove how a 'classical discipline such as philosophy can contribute to students' development as critical thinkers' (108).

The effective, informative fast feasible assessment of student learning is a recurring problem in our present education and as well as the increment of students' engagement in learning, as **Marnie Nolton** summarizes in article titled "**Letter to a dead philosopher**" (112-124). Education policy is waiting for evaluation models in which these need to be met, while at the same time they reflect and include all these elements. The "Letter of the dead philosopher," which is a multipurpose model along these ideas, that includes 'a rationale to place it and the learning objectives in context' (112): the careful attention and reading about what the author or speaker have thought of, what conclusions he wanted to be seen and how to use the structure of arguments - which is an important criteria of academic learning, too.

Jacqueline Z. Wilson in her essay (**Educational dissonance** 125-138) is critically reviews policy efforts in relation to the accumulation of "human capital"; she claims that artificially, along with directives and regulators or radical changes 'intellectual character' and the so-called human 'capital' are unlikely to be available, as the ideal of better education accomplishment (Better Education) is being created by the unique moments of life, during the *compulsive or (selective)fate-decided events* (i). This is supported by presenting her school career, and this provides a sense of narrative and a framework for the narrative analysis as well.

The essays of volume 'Pedagogies for the Future' actually dissect the topics that have been included into the professional public already - often the authors themselves indicate in their writings call their recent focus as a 'pedagogical truism', like *critical thinking development, teacher quality issues; issues of learning communities, educational policy questions* and generally, about 'dissonances' in recent Pedagogy - but these are placed and discussed in an innovative way and provide approaches in different light. These ideas are essential for the creation of the pedagogy of future of. And to summarize that what is the future of pedagogy? It is nothing else but today's pedagogy.

References:

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