



Transforming learning through Scholarship

Session Abstract

Using visual imagery to enhance reflective techniques in transformational learning and increase student engagement whilst on work placements

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This session will follow Sue's journey as a HE Tourism lecturer to devise and implement innovative capture of visual imagery, supporting students as they reflect and develop during their work placements *outside* the UK.

In the past, work placement guidance - to complement vocational learning - has been sporadic in attempts to ensure students meaningfully reflect on their experiences to understand wider contexts, lacking virtual interfaces to communicate, add diary entries or evidence of development *whilst* on placement. (Much reflection and write-up of learning continues to occur after placement has finished.)

The session proceeded with an exposition and brief slides of Sue's own research as part of her MA Education into developing VLE to support distance learning when students are on placements abroad. Most VLEs offer some kind of dedicated pedagogical tools, such as portfolios forums and collaborative writing, but these are not always used in an effective manner to record student placements (Loon & Teesley, 2009). This highlights a lack of structure in the way HEIs record and capture students' learning whilst on placement. Some stress of the importance of vocational development and beyond this - with transformational learning theory - will be made to incorporate a Pecha Kucha presentation with typifying images that elicit profound and meaningful or life-changing events taken by students while working on placement. These include images of geographical sites, accommodation and work-related activities that, in the abstract, allow a serious reflection of how broader experiences can inform learning beyond outcomes for assessment. Later images depicted students' contributions to their VLE as they create evidence to collate in a portfolio as assessment for modules on their programme of study.

The 'transformational' form of learning draws on theoretical insights and asserts a view that transformational learning has also been described by Mezirow (2003) as an adult form of metacognitive reasoning and there are arguments in favour of transformational learning being more applicable and feasible for people who are already at a mature level of cognitive function such as HE students and professionals (Merriam 2004). There is a connection between 'transformative' and 'transformational'. Both are related to the ability to transform and this transformation could also be in a radical way as evidenced by student's placement experiences. Where there is more opportunity for a transformative or transformational approach, there is an increased likelihood of an entire shift in viewpoint. Both are subjective reframing which involves critical self-reflection (Mezirow 2000). Clark (1993) describes transformational learning as a type of learning that produces change while Clark and Wilson (1991) provide connectivity to action by describing transformational learning as a guide to action which is based on meaning that has been construed from experience. Areas where a transformational learning approach has been used include professional development (Cranton and King 2003).

Sue used images in a Pecha Kucha style for part of her presentation to elaborate on Sue's own research and the wider model she has devised and recommends to similar programmes of study, such as sandwich courses common to HE.

References:

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Sue McKinnon has worked within education at FE and HE level for the last 12 years. She has a BA (Hons) in Education and is currently completing her MA in Education at Huddersfield University.