

A Pedagogical Narrative

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Introduction

As I was writing this article I came across a fascinating autobiographical blog post which began with the words, *'The more I debate education the more convinced I am that people's own educational biographies impact their idea(s)'* (McInerney 2012). I agree with this wisdom but I think we can go much further. As a teacher our own educational and learning experiences and biographical histories hugely impact on our beliefs, values, pedagogical thinking and practices. Who we are and how we have become who we are is the result of the history of experiences we have had and how we have responded to the ever unfolding present, reflected on and tried to make sense of our past and imagined and planned for our uncertain future

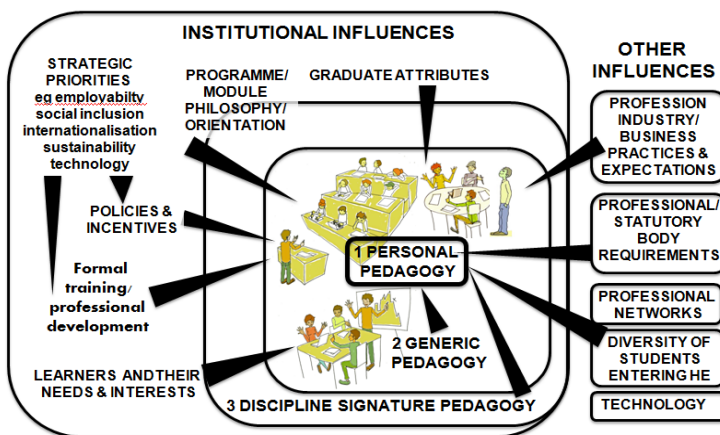
In the past few weeks I have been thinking about the idea of 'personal pedagogies' the pedagogical knowledge, theory and beliefs we develop over time, from many different sources and experiences that we make our own and draw upon in order to practice as a teacher, facilitator, activist or whatever role requires us to draw upon this resource.

Visualising and creating meaning through pictures - a key feature of my pedagogical thinking and practice

I have, since I was a boy, been interested in drawing: at 16 I wanted to go to art college.

When I studied geology at University there was plenty of opportunity for me to draw - in the field and in the laboratory. Field notebooks became my artistic sketch pad. My sketches helped me interpret and explain what I was observing. I learnt to annotate my sketches to give them more meaning. When I revised for exams I would often summarise what I had to learnt in a diagram. As I became immersed in the subject and began to represent my own interpretations and explanations of geological processes

When I moved into the field of education at the age of 40, I took these ways of visualising with me. When I try to explain a new concept (like a personal pedagogy) I try to turn it into a picture because the picture is an ecological expression of my thinking. It enables me to represent the components of the process, the objects that are in the process and the relationships and interactions between them in ways that are often difficult to explain in words and assimilate as an idea.



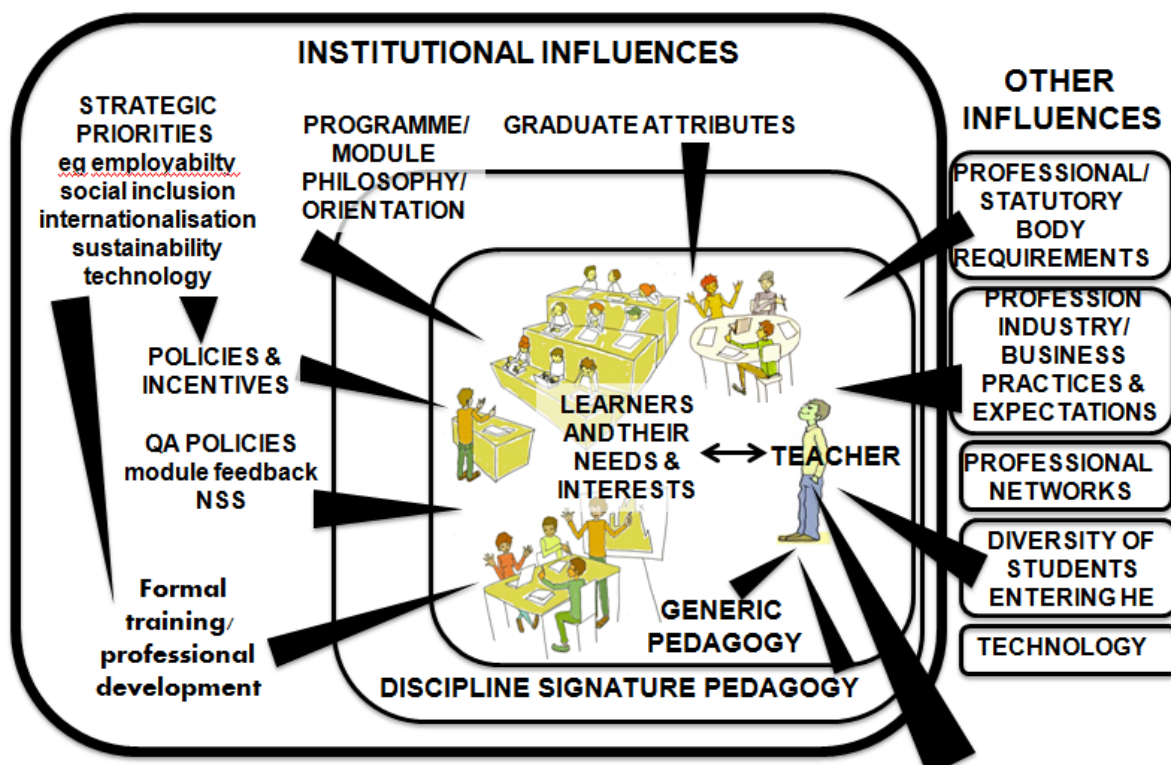
Complexity of influences on a higher education teacher's pedagogical thinking & practices

One of the things I did was to facilitate a #lthechat on Twitter to explore the idea with people who were interested. The format of Twitter is quite limiting for explanation of complex ideas so I created a picture to stimulate discussion (Figure 1).

Figure 1 My first attempt to visualise the idea of a personal pedagogy shared in the #lthechat 08/13/17

Pictures are the way I visualise something. They enable me to make what I see in my imagination visible, they enable me to engage people and gain their perspectives (feedback) on my ideas and they enable me to create something that means something to me. I know from many experiences that inviting people to comment on the meanings in a picture generally works, especially if the picture is incomplete and people can add their own ideas or alternative perspectives. This is what happened in the #lthechat and as a result of the feedback I created a version 2 (Figure 2). This illustrates how these drawings are always provisional they are always contingent on the current explorations I am involved in.

Figure 2 My second attempt to visualise the idea of a personal pedagogy.



My personal pedagogy involves my awareness, disciplinary & pedagogical knowledge and skill, interests, beliefs, values, emotions, history – what I care about, in fact everything I can bring to the situation to fulfil my role as a teacher and help my learners learn

When faced with a new 'teaching/facilitating' situation I know intuitively that I must draw upon this visual way of thinking and representing but its only when I take the trouble to think about my own history that I can see that the origins of this intuition lie in my childhood interest in drawing and painting and my geological interpretations of the world I observed. Its only through reflecting on the things I have done in my life that I can see how this interest has transferred and how the techniques have adapted for use in lots of different roles. I can also see how technologies like powerpoint, paint, photoshop and even animation software like 'explee' have all enhanced my ability to create. Using pictures to visualise and explain is a fundamental feature of my practice when I try to engage learners and peers in learning processes and in my writing, so in this way it has become an integral part of my pedagogical practice.

I use this illustration to show how, with a bit of effort, we can construct a biography that seeks to make sense of my own pedagogical journey to identify the origin of the knowledge, beliefs and values that influence our thinking and practice as a higher education teacher.

OPEN INVITATION

If you would like to join our Personal Pedagogies project please join our open conversation between March 27-31 on the #creativeHE Google+ Forum

<https://plus.google.com/communities/110898703741307769041>

During this conversation you will be encouraged to create and share your own pedagogical narrative.

Alternatively, if you would like to create and share your own pedagogical narrative I would be very interested to see it.

References

Mcinerney L (2012) Schooling Biography blog post

<https://lauramcinerney.com/2012/11/25/schooling-biography/>