



Nova Southeastern University
NSUWorks

Fischler College of Education: Faculty Presentations

Abraham S. Fischler College of Education

7-1-2015

Theory to Practice: The Need for Relevance

David B. Ross

Nova Southeastern University, daviross@nova.edu

Joana Figueiredo

James Cook University, Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center, jfigueiredo@nova.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://nsuworks.nova.edu/fse_facpres

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

NSUWorks Citation

Ross, David B. and Figueiredo, Joana, "Theory to Practice: The Need for Relevance" (2015). *Fischler College of Education: Faculty Presentations*. Paper 241.

http://nsuworks.nova.edu/fse_facpres/241

This Lecture is brought to you for free and open access by the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fischler College of Education: Faculty Presentations by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.

Theory to Practice: The Need for Relevance

Dr. David B. Ross
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education

Dr. Joana Figueiredo
College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography

In higher education or any post-K-12 learning, adults need their instruction and learning outcomes to be relevant to their professional and personal needs. To achieve this, colleges and universities need to move from typical lectures, examinations, and rote memorization (suitable to K-12 learning, *pedagogy*) to more appropriate means of learning for adults (*andragogy*) such as team sessions, applied problem solving, and interviews (Roldan, 2010). In other words, regardless of the adult education philosophy (traditional, behaviorist, progressive, humanistic, or radical), the instructional process and curriculum needs to be relevant.

Aside from personal fulfillment, adults seek university-level education to increase their chances of attaining a good job. Yet, nowadays having a university degree is often insufficient to achieve this objective. Employers are asking for experience with certain techniques, software and/or procedures, ability to work in multi-disciplinary teams, and leadership skills. To better prepare our students for the job market and increase their chances of success (which is then reflected on the learning organization), a learning model must be developed to link theory to practice (Frisby, 2012).

A “Theory to Practice” class model has the potential to provide the currently expected professional requirements to all our students. Adopting “Theory to Practice” as a QEP could promote a university-wide environment where all lessons, assignments, discussion topics, and projects are relevant and help our students use their learning to propel them into the new job,

position, and/or career of their aspirations; instead of constituting just *busy-work*. For example, most biology job advertisements ask for candidates with experience conducting field surveys and/or ability to communicate scientific findings with natural resource managers, industry partners and politicians. To provide these experiences and gain these skills, biology classes could have a stronger practical component. This could be implemented through course projects where students have to conduct a small field survey and then write a report of their findings to a management agency. Likewise, “management courses could consistently provide the same percentage of theory and applicability with the right methodology appropriate for adult learners. This process could help businesses provide a consistent set of products and services taking as their basis lessons learned in management schools” (Rolan, 2010, p. 7). In addition, dissertation chairs must allow their doctoral dissertation students to study and research topics that will directly benefit the student.

A class design where students are taught the theory and then asked to apply it is already being successfully implemented in some colleges. The Abraham Fischler College of Education created a simulation course which provides student-student and student-faculty engagement. This course along with a leadership seminar is providing the students with a better understanding of the characteristics of a confident and effective leader and has real-world application. Students are given the tools needed to function in any type of organizational structure: accountability, strong connections, communicative and collaborative skills, and especially developing team concepts of diverse learners. For example, they learn that trust and building rapport constitute some of the most powerful characteristics for a leader in any setting (Ross & Exposito, 2014).

In summary, a “Theory to Practice” class format would increase the marketability of our students and their professional success. As a consequence, it would increase the reputation of our university and attract more and better students.

References

- Frisby, S. (2012). *An analysis of the effects of varying levels of implementation of disciplines associated with learning organizations and student achievement at California schools with similar demographic characteristics* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3535786)
- Roldan, A. (2010). *The correlation between rigor and relevance using pedagogical and andragogical instructional methods in American business schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3396513)
- Ross, D. B., & Exposito, J. A. (2014). A dual perspective in leadership and decision making through a distance learning simulated city. *International Journal of Education and Social Science*, 1(3), 1-13.