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Review of Changing Higher Education: The Development of Learning and Teaching

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Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Ashwin, Paul (Ed.). (2006.) *Changing Higher Education: The Development of Learning and Teaching*. London & New York: Routledge. Pages: xvi, 152. Price: 145.00 USD (hardcover).

Reviewed by Ana Jofré, Department of Physics and Optical Science, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Changing higher education – The development of learning & teaching is a collection of essays by various contributors that together provide a cohesive and comprehensive analysis of how demographic and policy changes as well changes in pedagogical directions have affected higher education. The book is comprised of three parts, namely, the development of student learning in higher education, the development of learning technologies in higher education, and the development of teaching in higher education.

The section focusing on the development of student learning in higher education has four contributed chapters. David Boud provides an informative exploration of the meaning of “learner-centered.” He points out that the shift in paradigm towards “learner-centeredness” over the past 30 years has resulted in a large range of pedagogical methodologies as scholars and educators developed various visions of learner-centeredness. Learner-centeredness is characterized by putting students in control of their own learning. However, there is a limitation to this control, as there are curricula to be followed and standards to be met by the degree-granting institutions. In the following chapter, Vivien Hodgson focuses on the assessment process, which is where the learner is most powerless, and explores progress to date in participative assessment methods. The discussion on the development of student learning is taken beyond the undergraduate level with Pam Denicolo’s survey of changes in post-graduate education. Since many post-graduate degree programs have gone beyond being purely research-based to encompass more applied professional arenas, they have been forced to move away from the traditional apprenticeship model of post-graduate training. Will Bridge notes in the following chapter that in general over the past 30 years, there has been a significant increase in “non-traditional” post-secondary learners. The term “non-traditional” includes international students, racial and

socio-economic minorities, and part-time and mature students returning to better engage in the new knowledge-based economy. His focus is on the latter type of non-traditional students. Bridge examines how the social, economic, and policy changes that brought non-traditional learners into the fold have affected pedagogical thinking and practice.

The section on the development of learning technologies has two contributed chapters that, while being optimistic in welcoming the progress in technology, draw our attention to the developmental gap between rapidly advancing technologies and our understanding of how to integrate these technologies in teaching and learning. Diana Laurillard explores how we can learn to use these technological developments in teaching by drawing very useful and insightful analogies to old existing technologies and their applications. David McConnell's chapter focuses specifically on how these technologies are and can be applied to collaborative pedagogy.

The third part of the book is on the development of teaching practices in higher education and analyzes the tensions between the obligations of scholars to their discipline-specific research and to their teaching. Liz Beaty in her chapter discusses the possibility of accreditation in teaching higher education, the difficulties in reaching that goal, and highlights the advantages that accreditation of teaching would bring to higher learning. Lorraine Stefani's chapter on teaching scholarship provides a compelling argument for professors to expand their scholarship beyond research within their disciplines and into how to teach their discipline.

Editor Paul Ashwin unifies all of these contributions with an introductory exposition of the discussions that follow and also with a concluding chapter that extends all of the ideas developed in the book into possible scenarios for the future for higher education. Although the topics and views presented are somewhat diverse, the entire work is cohesive, as the individual chapters construct their discussions in reference to one another.

Although the book pertains specifically to higher education in the UK and the discussions of particular policy changes concern the UK alone, the general sociological and demographic changes discussed are applicable to most industrialized nations. Furthermore, there is an explicit effort to refer to parallel policy changes that have occurred in other countries.

Overall, *Changing Higher Education* is an insightful read that clearly elucidates the interactions between policy, scholarship, and practice. Although this book is a strong scholarly work, it is devoid of jargon and hence accessible to academics from various disciplines who have an interest in teaching scholarship. This is a key success of this work, as its underlying aim is to encourage other scholars to take an interest in the scholarship of teaching in higher education. ♣