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Narrative and the student experience in education for archaeology

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In memoriam

John Clyn
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Abstract

In this study, I set out to address a problem of conceptualisation in archaeology. That problem concerns the role and scope of education in the discipline and has consequences for practice. Despite initiatives in teaching and learning in the discipline in recent decades, a thorough understanding of and attention to the educational task is still not accorded the place it merits in disciplinary activity. Central to a better understanding of the priorities and purposes of education for archaeology is an understanding of the student perspective. This perspective: of what students believe archaeology is for; what formal study of the subject offers; and, the role they see for the discipline in their lives is critical for educational planning and practice. Knowledge of the student perspective is critical because it is where the transactional process of learning begins. Without this knowledge, articulated and explicated in a systematic and in-depth way, educational ventures may be at worst misconceived and at best operating from an unduly partial perspective. Students' reasons for studying are often conceived and represented, by and to themselves and to others, as narrative. Herein, I develop understanding of the student perspective by placing it in the context of disciplinary, educational and narrative theory to illuminate the emergence and development of student interest in archaeology. Such a study has not previously been attempted and is a major step in developing the truly student-centred learning advocated by educational theorists. The study also throws light, from the student perspective, on the discipline itself: its current preoccupations and its ontological and epistemological complexities. I also explore how we can apply a lens to the process of research in archaeology education through the application of an appropriate qualitative methodology for investigating perceptual questions, a grounded theory approach. Foundational to the proposition that knowledge of the student perspective is critical for educational practice, is the consideration that research in the discipline should be extended to education just as it is applied to research about the human past. This study thus looks beyond achieving good teaching techniques and argues for a research culture of education in archaeology, a scholarship of teaching and learning.

Candidate's certification

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Catherine Clarke

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