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Configuring learning spaces: noticing the invisible

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Why is 'learning space' important?

- Only in their having learning space can students flourish
- In learning space, students can take off, fly
- Become themselves
- A pedagogy of air
- More generally, universities become themselves in the spaces that they occupy.

Conceptual hinterland

- Freedom
- Openness
- Democracy
- Creativity
- Dissolving of boundaries

So 'learning space' is a subversive concept

The idea of a learning space

- A space for learning
- Spaces for learning
- Physical space
- Cognitive space – a licence to roam
- Epistemological space – a journey across fields/ disciplines
 - Implies weak boundaries
- Psychological/ pedagogical space – spacious ‘frames’ (BB)
- Curricula space – uncrowded; but yet spacious, with different experiences

Towards a taxonomy of learning space

Domains of learning space:

- Material/ physical space
- Educational space – the spaces of the curriculum/ pedagogy
 - [epist/ pract/intellec]
- Interior space – the interior being of the student (its own learning spaces/ 'Bildung')

3 interconnecting fields (circles), of greater/ lesser significance; of nearer/ distant proximity

NB: Virtual space – a means of realising each domain

A language of learning space

- Liminal(ity)
 - Liquid
 - Transitional
 - Fluidity
 - Flows
 - Provisionality
 - Fragility
 - Borders – borderless
- Movement within/ across spaces;

Learning spaces – ideological landscape

- From an educational philosophy built on knowledge to an educational philosophy built on being
 - From 'syllabus' and even 'curriculum' to process/ experience

ie, a fundamentally different conception of learning;

- Not filling up but opening out
 - clearing an opening for the student's own explorations/ voyage (metaphor of travel)
 - Space to venture forth – off the syllabus; off-campus;
 - Academic freedom for students
 - Space to be heard – for the student voice
 - » Students as poets
 - The idea of a learning 'space' as the in-between.
- NB: tension between 'learning outcomes' and learning space

The riskiness of learning spaces

- The student as free spirit
- Unforeseen learning – creative learning/ serendipity
- Inefficient learning
- Troublesome learning/ awkward learning

Scope, depth, and connectedness

- Range of learning spaces
- Depth
- Relationships
- A deep learning space may be brought at the expense of a range of learning spaces; and vice versa

Potency of learning space; & spaciousness

- Is the learning space potent?
- Is it efficacious?
- Is the student encouraged to travel into the learning space?
- And to make their own explorations? To become themselves?
- And to be creative in those explorations
- Availability + encouragement + spaciousness = *potency*

Spaciousness itself

- Breadth of view
- Interconnectedness
- Largeness of outlook
- Vision
- Wisdom
- Criticality – requires alternative learning spaces

Noticing the invisible

- Choice of learning spaces is just that: choice
 - ie, alternatives foregone
- So what is excluded? Rules of inclusion/ exclusion?
- Are some planes of learning hidden or occluded from view forever?
- In focusing on the local (work-based learning) are larger vistas foregone?
- Distinguish two forms of the invisible:
 - That which is excluded by reason of educational aim
 - a provision of lng spaces for effective performance reduces spaces for reflection: ‘ideological invisibility’
 - That which is present but unnoticed: ‘myopic invisibility’

Learning spaces and whole-life learning

- The metaphor of 'learning spaces' – travel/ journey/ passage/ possibilities – 'being possible' (Heidegger)
- An opening/ a clearing/ a space for one's own endeavours
- ('Space' loses its meaning if it means yielding one closure for another)
- Space – venturing not just into the unknown but into new realms of educational being
- Being itself; students' life-world
- New rooms, and offering vistas for insight/ critique; but inter-connected
- 'Striated' and 'smooth' surfaces (Deleuze and Guattari)

An ecology of learning spaces

- Interconnectedness of the domains of LS
- With the student in the centre of this dynamic
- Idea of sustainability of this turbulence
- Openness; unpredictability
- Including the student's self-sustainability

Conclusion: the educational challenge

- What kinds of *curricula*?
 - Principles of curricula design?
- What kind of *pedagogy*? – of pedagogical relationship?
- Openness – for student's decision-making; wandering; creativity
- Authenticity – with responsibility being placed on the student