Site-based praxis development and the University sector

Ian Hardy ², Peter Grootenboer¹, Laurette Bristol³
¹Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Gold Coast, QLD, Australia, ²University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia, ³Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia

In this paper we focus on the development of educational practice and praxis in the university context. We utilize Schatzki’s (2002) notion that practices are ‘the site of the social’, and our own recent work on ‘site-based education development’ as a form of praxis (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer & Bristol, 2014) to investigate university teaching practices in Australia. Drawing upon the presenters’ individual and collective inquiries into three instances of change in three Australian universities, and at three levels of inquiry (personally; faculty-wide; university-wide), we reveal how the praxis-focused activities of individuals, and collective reflective inquiry can help stimulate transformed educational practice in the university sector.

The educational landscape in the university sector, like the other education sectors, is being dominated by a "performative audit culture" (Comber & Nixon, 2011, p. 168), and academics are having their teaching practices constrained and determined by a range of more bureaucratic and performative ‘practice architectures’ (Kemmis et al, 2014; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) . The difficult and limited practice arrangements of tertiary teaching demand a more praxis-oriented response. Here, we provide accounts of how some academics responded to the practice architectures that seemed to be limiting their capacity to teach and research well', and how they sought to act in ways that were in the best interests of education in the university sector.

The research draws upon a variety of sources of data, including interviews, personal reflective journals, and collective reflection upon publicly available correspondence in the university sector. Through explicating the value of a site-based educational approach in the university sector, we build upon current understandings of educational practice, praxis and action research by emphasizing and revealing the nature and effects of the local in site based educational development.

References