

Signature Pedagogies

Educators have prepared students for professional practices for centuries; however, their examination of the educational practices and disciplinary assumptions about that educational process are a relatively new phenomenon, known as Signature Pedagogies.



Lee Shulman defines signature pedagogies as “the types of teaching that organize the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for their new professions (2005, p. 52). As Shulman explains, a signature pedagogy has three dimensions: surface structure, deep structure, and an implicit structure. Surface structures consist of concrete, operational acts of teaching and learning, while deep structures reflect a set of assumptions about how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how. The implicit structure includes a moral dimension that comprises a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values, and dispositions (pp. 54-55).

The Carnegie Foundation sponsored a series of comparative studies that examined how the members of different professions (e.g., clergy, 2005; lawyers, 2007; engineers, 2008; nurses, 2009; and physicians, 2010) are educated for their responsibilities in the communities they serve. These studies identified what many faculty implicitly or explicitly already know; “faculty want students to learn more than basic content; we want them to understand and practice disciplinary ways of thinking or habits of mind” (Chick, Haynie, & Gurung, 2009, p. 2) and to do so in ethical, moral, and/or professionally-prescribed ways.

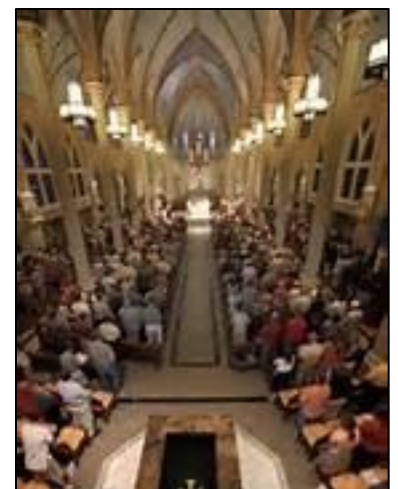


Gurung, Chick, and Haynie (2009) recognized that academic disciplines also have distinctive habits of mind that characterize disciplinary pedagogies (i.e., signature pedagogies are not unique to certain professions). These “signature pedagogies” reflect the deep structures of the discipline or profession and attempt to answer questions such as: “What does our pedagogy reveal, intentionally or otherwise, about the habits of head, hand, and heart as we purport to foster through our disciplines?” “Is there, or should there be, a consistent connection between a way a discipline creates or discovers new knowledge and the way it apprentices new learners? (Ciccone,

2009, p. xii). Building upon the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), Gurung, Chick, and Haynie (2009) and Chick, Haynie, and Gurung (2012) explore how 29 distinct and interdisciplinary fields foster deep learning and help students think like disciplinary experts.

Signature pedagogies builds on widely accepted assumptions about what leads to significant learning, drawing upon a number of earlier works (cf. Huber & Morreale, 2002; Pace & Middendorf, 2004) as well as offering rich questions for exploration within the field of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Signature pedagogies are important “precisely because they are pervasive. They implicitly define what counts as knowledge in the field and how things become known” (Shulman, 2005, p. 54).

To learn more about signature pedagogies, see the article by Shulman posed on the Virtual Center. As you read this article, reflect on your own discipline. What habits of head, hand, and heart are inherent to your profession? How can you foster these in your students?



Links:

See current Shulman article listed on webpage.

<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/summary-educating-physicians>

<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/elibrary/educating-nurses-highlights>

see Educating Lawyers pdf

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Huber, M.T., & Morreale, S. P. (2002). *Disciplinary styles in the scholarship of teaching and learning: Exploring common ground*. Washington DC: American Association for Higher Education and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Pace, D., & Middendorf, J. (2004). *Decoding the disciplines: Helping students learn disciplinary ways of thinking*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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