Without the “Doing” - Analysis is Disempowered

Bob McCartney

Vancouver Community College
Without the “Doing” - Analysis is Disempowered

Developing a Professional Field of Practice – Quote 1 of 5

The third quote I have chosen to reflect upon is (Merriam and Brockett, 2007, p. 253) from the “Developing a Professional Field of Practice” (item 1 of 5). They state, “Without the doing, without taking action, all of the analysis or reflection is disempowered.” (p. 253)

**Objective:** This quote discusses the core of having a field of professional practice. Without “doing” there is no point to analysing what “could be”. The thing that caught my attention was the lack of power in reflecting on ideas without taking action. Researchers Merriam and Brockett (2007, p. 253) define praxis as "the interaction of reflection and action. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines praxis as “exercise or practice of an art, science, or skill; practical application of a theory”. Educators need to both reflect and exercise action. Otherwise, there will be no positive impact in our sphere of influence, for lasting change of any consequence or significance.

**Reflective:** After reading the quote (Merriam and Brockett, 2007 p. 253) and upon doing further research, I realized that a key role of educators, is to put things into practice for ourselves. Then we can assist adult learners in developing skills to help reach their individual goals and create an environment to assist social change in our world. Reflection and analysis are symbiotic with action. We should not just reflect without doing anything about our thoughts, and we do not want to take action without thinking (except in an emergency like a fire (automatic action to
get out). As we continue to move back and forth through these elements, they will have an impact on us for the next steps in our progress.

**Interpretive:** So much of my life has been influenced by “action and reflection”. In my teenage years I determined I would keep learning beyond high school and began saving money to pay for my first year at university. If I did not reflect, I would not have taken the step to get a job and earn the money to attend post-secondary education. I had already determined that I did not want to go into debt to attend school and I was not going to get any significant financial help from family and friends. Finances could have prevented me from accomplishing my dream to attain the level of education I felt I needed to succeed in life. When I read the quote (Merriam and Brockett, 2007, p. 253), my “Aha” moment was to realize that I needed both action and reflection to succeed. Early in life, I added a third element to the mix. That element was to eliminate the word “try”. Before we were married in 1977, I discussed with my fiancée that we were not going to ‘try’ to be married. We would “do” marriage. Breaking up was not an option. Interestingly this same idea surfaced in the “Star Wars” movie released later the same year. Yoda the master teacher of the Jedi knights said, “Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try”. This idea has led to many accomplishments and created huge impact in all areas of my life. Educators may not always be able to provide each student with the resolve to have a “do” attitude, however introducing the concept along with action and reflection will contribute to better learning.

**Decisional:** This quote emphasises the need for educators to understand how reflection and action work together. I am aware that the combination of education theory, philosophy, and developing a professional field of practice on their own are useless. Syracuse University has a manual (n.d.) on their website for faculty subtitled “Creating an Action Plan”. This resource (n.d.) says:
Instead of asking, “What am I going to do in each class session?” focus on, “What are students going to do?” Identify topics that lend themselves to classroom activities and select one or more instructional methods for each class session: lectures, small group discussions, independent work, simulations, debates, case studies, role playing, demonstrations, experiential learning activities, instructional technologies, collaborative learning work, etc. (p. 18)

I will use this resource and others like it to help prepare student activities where they will be doing more than just listening and reflecting. I will use practical examples from this and other University guidelines to create adult learner exercises that must be coupled with action. These action plans can be further enhanced with the notion of using the phrase “I will” verses “I will try”. Nike’s “just do it” attitude has already done much to inspire many generations of students. I plan to develop course materials and activities that strike a balance between theory and action. I will use this idea of balance to influence my students to consider, reflect, analyse and especially to take action, to lead them to choose more productive paths in their journey of learning and of life.
References


