Interdisciplinary Teaching – the advantages and challenges of teaching in teams

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Our talk today

- Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching

- Examples of practice in the IPO

- What has worked (or not)

- How we are developing our teaching further

Across the UK HE sector

A New Approach?

- A number of multi-subject UG programmes have appeared in recent years

- Some of these have integrated 'interdisciplinary' core modules

But:

- These have proven to be unpopular with students - favour disciplinary topics?

http://www.sesync.org/blog/teaching-ses

Interdisciplinary Programmes Office – Arts and Humanities

- Combined Honours – Triple
  - No core modules; select from available modules across Faculty of A&H
- Elective Modules (IPO)
  - **IPA1000/2000/3000 Interdisciplinary Research in Practice**
  - IPA601 Introduction to Public Humanities
  - IPA1010/2010 LGBT* Studies
- Team taught - different disciplinary perspectives

Interdisciplinary Research in Practice

- Different lecturers deliver sessions on their own area of research

- All sessions each year are based loosely on a theme

- Students then must use at least two 'methods' when applying it to their own research question

- How does the question influence the research?

Themes

- Overarching themes of 'Work', 'Generations' and 'Social Justice'

- Some of the talks from 2016-17

  - Big Data, Big Collaborations: the management of research in experimental particle physics (Physics)

  - What can, and what should, scientists be allowed to do in pursuit of resolving infertility....and who decides? (Biomedical Sciences)

  - Social justice on screen: contemporary French cinema (French)

  - The Highbrows and the Eyebrows: audiences and expectations when performing music (Music)

  - Using Archives to Explore Cultural Responses to Thatcherism: The case of Barry Hines (English)

  - A Monster's Memoir': Researching Myra Hindley's 'Prison Files' (Sociology)

  - Corpora, meaning, and anti-science (Digital Humanities)

Comments

- <u>Students</u>

  - "This module needs PUBLICITY EVERYWHERE. Highly rewarding…"

  - "Engaging, fun, friendly, super-interesting."

- <u>External Examiner</u>

  - "The modules make the students think in new and different ways. Importantly the modules make the students address new academic areas, or apply academic methodologies for the first time (for the students) to 'everyday' issues."

What we have learned

- Different members delivering sessions

  - Something can be lacking in coherence and consistency across the module

- This time

  - Important to make room for setting the scene

  - This needs to be revisited throughout the module – follow ups – discussion based on presentations

  - Underpinned by pedagogical work – Vygotsky/Piaget

Vygotsky - Social Development Theory in Learning
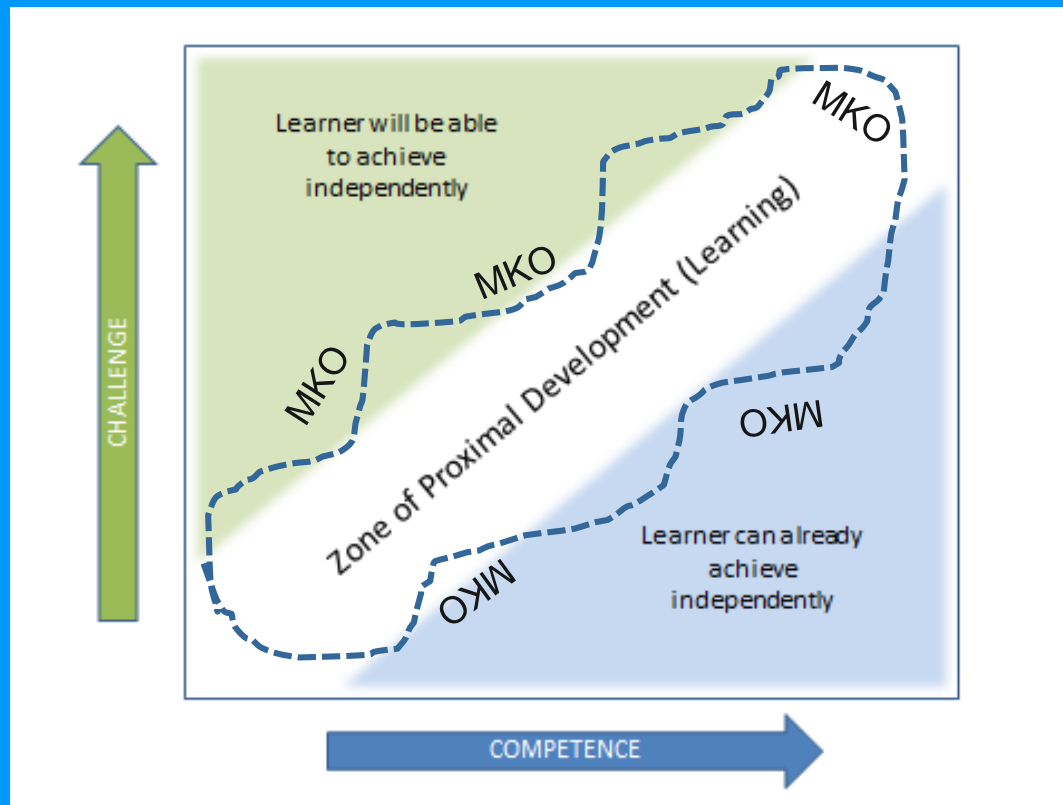
The community in which learning takes place has a role in creating a 'meaning' for the information gained

Vygotsky's ZPD includes the social community of teachers & learners

This year

- Set the scene – spent more time developing approach in class – two sessions on 'practice' and definitions

- Explore ways of 'knowing' – disciplinary differences in approach and experience

- Encouraged and discussed knowledge that the group already had – examine knowledge 'production'

Good Practice

- Module design with high levels of student input & collaboration

- Good facilitation of team-taught content – needs a strong lead

- LGBT* Studies – Portfolio assessment (reflective practice)

- Next year will be working with how assessment methods might be developed

It isn't easy!

- There aren't necessarily 'right' answers – challenging to students

- Challenging aspects of co-production of knowledge

- Process – not product: Learning and collaboration, not necessarily 'knowing the answer'

- Re-negotiation – non-linear pathways of teaching

Summary – key points

- Team delivery is one way to approach interdisciplinarity learning and teaching

- This can't be done without support of a theoretical framework and a recognition of learning processes

- Interdisciplinarity needs constant re-negotiation and reflection

- Interdisciplinary thinking can't be 'taught'

Questions?

- ## Short Bibliography

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To Discover And Understand.