



Michael S. Dukakis addressing University Research and American Agenda conference

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

Overview

Knowledge, Practice and the Modern American Research University

Liberal Education and Effective Practice: Implications for the Organization of Undergraduate Liberal Education

Knowledge, Practice and Experience: Implications for the Human Sciences

Overview

My interest in the connection between knowledge and practice came through the merging of two separate activities: my research interests in the area of human development and my tenure as Associate Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at Clark University from 2002- 2009. Across these years, I also served as an executive board member and President of the *Jean Piaget Society for the Study of Knowledge and Development*. During this time, it became apparent that there has been a subtle shift in paradigm within the academy to rethink the relationship between theory, research and practice. This has been signified by increasing discussions about narrowing the gap between basic and applied research, as well as discussions within higher education about bolstering traditional views of liberal education with increasing emphasis on practice I became interested in linking re-conceptualizations of knowledge and practice taking place within the developmental and learning sciences to discussions on knowledge construction and dissemination within research and higher education circles.

Along with others at Clark, I became involved in planning a series of conferences and initiatives that have taken up topics related to effective practice. My own role has been to begin considering ways revised conceptions of knowledge and practice impact not only the organization of Clark University's academic programming, but also how work at Clark might play a role in broader thinking about a bold new vision of the modern urban research university. All of these conferences have approached the theme of *Knowledge and Practice* from slightly different angles but when combined suggest an exciting moment where scholarship on knowledge and practice stemming from the developmental and learning sciences can thoughtfully be integrated into a slowly evolving paradigm shift within the academy that has opened up discussions to include consideration of the contextualization of knowledge production and dissemination. Links to each of the conference websites and further information about each of these projects can be found below:

Knowledge, Practice and the Modern American Research University

At the inaugural conference on *University Research and the American Agenda*, the Mosakowski Institute for Public Enterprise at Clark University (<http://www.clarku.edu/research/mosakowskiinstitute>) considered how universities can increase the impact of their research in addressing critical public issues. The conference, which took place in November 2008, brought together leading scholars and practitioners to consider innovative ways in which researchers and practitioners can collaborate more productively. The conventional notion of basic research being conducted first with the hope of someday having broader impact on public life was challenged at the conference and new possibilities that more closely tie together notions of research and practice were considered. Implications for transformative research and the training of the next generation of scholars also were considered. Further information can be found at: <http://www.clarku.edu/research/mosakowskiinstitute/conferences/nov13/index.cfm>

Liberal Education and Effective Practice: Implications for the Organization of Undergraduate Liberal Education

There is a growing consensus within discussions of higher education in the US about a pressing need to consider how to organize the undergraduate learning experience so that students come to think deeply about and can better navigate real world problems in all their complexity. The conference at Clark University in March 2009, organized by Richard Freeland and co-sponsored by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), brought together leading educators and practitioners to consider



Nancy Budwig: The emergence of use-inspired research presentation with David P. Angel



LEEP Conference: Working Session 1: Intelligence and Effective Practice



LEEP Conference: Working Session V: Liberal education, effective practice, and diversity



Knowledge, Practice, and Experience Conference



Jaan Valsiner: Knowledge, Practice, and Experience Conference



Nancy Budwig: Knowledge, Practice, and Experience Conference



Knowledge, Practice, and Experience Conference

necessary and bold reforms with a focus on what it means to be liberally educated (<http://www.clarku.edu/research/mosakowskiinstitute/conferences/mar12/index.cfm>) in the 21st century. The conference discussions drew upon a series of commissioned papers (see

<http://www.clarku.edu/research/mosakowskiinstitute/conferences/mar12/papers.cfm>) and resulted in a monograph which includes a series of short essays that will appear in the Fall 2009 issue of *Liberal Education* (<http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/index.cfm>).

Clark's work on *Liberal Education and Effective Practice* (coined LEEP) is an ongoing initiative (see <http://www.clarku.edu/LEEP/> for further information). Central to this work is the conviction that students will need to draw upon not only disciplinary knowledge and the capacity to inquire deeply but also a broader set of skills and capacities including the ability to persuade, persevere, collaborate, and the capacity to apply knowledge with agility from one setting to another. This initiative is based on the view that knowledge and knowledge development are fundamentally social activities and that participation in communities of practice is an essential ingredient to the learning process. Further information about the linkages between this initiative and the developmental and learning sciences can be found here:

<http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/2013/May-June%202013/learning-sciences-full.html>

Knowledge, Practice and Experience: Implications for the Human Sciences

The November 2009 conference, linked to the Centennial Celebration at Clark of Freud's 1909 visit and organized in conjunction with Michael Bamberg and Jaan Valsiner, considered the implications of contemporary accounts of knowledge for research and teaching in psychology and related human sciences. In contrast to prior accounts of knowledge which have emphasized representational views embodied in the depiction of Rodin's "Thinker", newer accounts emphasize the social situatedness of knowledge and the extent to which knowledge development is embedded in social practices. This new and innovative view leaves open the question of how knowledge moves across types of activities (academic, practice-based and action-oriented activities) as well as how one best links practice and the generation and dissemination of knowledge to the diversity of experiential backgrounds and pathways of individuals, communities and organizations across development. Further information including abstracts of three anchor presentations and summaries of six follow-up papers can be found at: <http://www.clarku.edu/micro/freudcentennial/conferences/conference2.cfm>.