Understanding the world today

The role of knowledge and knowing in higher education

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Knowledge is not a passive product of learning that can be possessed, but rather it represents an active engagement with ideas, arguments and the world in which they reside. This engagement requires a state of ‘knowing’ – a complex, integrative, reciprocal process that unites the knower with the to-be-known.
MY CONTEXT

Dr Elizabeth Hauke, Principal Teaching Fellow

IMPERIAL COLLEGE
 STEMM specialist institution with faculties of Engineering, Natural Sciences and Medicine

CHANGE MAKERS
 Modules within Imperial Horizons that challenge students to create meaningful change in the world

IMPERIAL HORIZONS
 Cross faculty programme to broaden undergraduate learning

LIVE, LOVE, LEARN
 The curriculum design approach developed within Change Maker modules
LIVE, LOVE, LEARN

WWW.LIVELOVELEARN.EDUCATION

**AUTHENTICITY**
All learning is tailored to generate authentic interactions between the students, teacher and topic

**ACTIVE LEARNING**
Explicit, practical, kinaesthetic, emotional, democratic, reflexive and dynamic classes

**STUDENT EMPOWERED**
Students retain independence to direct their own learning and make active choices

**PROCESS-BASED**
Working methods and skill development are prioritised over content and product
INFORMATION + KNOWING = KNOWLEDGE

Bringing the student into the equation

THE CHALLENGE IS TO CREATE ‘KNOWING’
CASE STUDY

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

3\textsuperscript{RD}/4\textsuperscript{TH} YEAR UG MODULE

• Team based learning
  • students work in fixed teams throughout
  • students work through a repeating cycle of tasks to facilitate:
    • discovery
    • knowledge building
    • application

• Students explore disasters to consider whether we can learn from history to protect the future of civilization
  • Chernobyl
  • LA Riots
  • 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami
  • BSE and HIV/AIDS
  • Team Choice
  • Class Choice
‘Although [higher education] can justifiably take pride in its capacity to develop the students’ ability to manipulate the material world [...], it has paid relatively little attention to the students’ “inner” development, the sphere of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, moral development, spirituality and self-understanding’.

COMING TO ‘KNOW’ ABOUT THE LA RIOTS

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO MAKE YOU RIOT?
Students explore emotion, injustice and humanity
Williamson describes two levels of interaction between the world and the mind – action (where the world is adapted to the mind) and knowledge (where the mind is adapted to the world). When this adaptation is incomplete or imperfect, desire and belief are generated. Desire drives our action to achieve a state of satisfaction, and belief drives our formulation of knowledge to find truth.


Lyotard’s take on knowledge requires competence in three areas:

- efficiency (technical or scientific thought)
- happiness (moral and ethical thinking)
- beauty (aesthetic and experiential critique)

Lyotard elevates knowledge from sitting within a single discipline, way of thinking or type of competence, to something that can only exist when these different strands are brought together and united in one confluous piece of thinking, perhaps suggesting that knowledge represents a higher order of cognitive processing that requires movement and exploration beyond the confines of a single discipline.

DURING THE PRE-CHRISTMAS CYCLE, STUDENT TEAMS PICK THEIR OWN DISASTER

‘In half an hour, you need to present your event to the rest of the class. And I’m thinking that this should be something more than a presentation of facts – I’m not going to say what, just that I want **more** and that perhaps you could be a bit **interpretive**…’
LAKE NYOS

VENEZUELAN MUDSLIDES
‘Produce a **physical** knowledge base that conveys how key information can be brought together to communicate the **meaning and impact** of this disaster’
There was a planning and experimenting week
Learning could be considered an axis of interaction with the world, where at one end there is a transactional interaction with the creation of an increasing repertoire of discrete items of information, and at the other end there is a more experiential form of learning resulting in a transformational interaction and the development of knowledge.
The ‘Face-Facts’ Challenge
SO WHAT (OR WHO) IS KNOWLEDGE TO THESE STUDENTS?
SO WHAT (OR WHO) IS KNOWLEDGE TO THESE STUDENTS?

‘The chancellor cannot be defeated. We have fired endless information at her and she refuses to accept it. We must make a weapon called knowledge that will send the Hauke back to her tower’

‘We have been on many quests to protect our Princess, Knowledge’

‘We will only succeed when we find and befriend ’Knowledge’. To find her, we must complete these trials’
Thank you for listening

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