

Collaborative Curriculum Development: a Transformative Process for Transformative Education

– the Case of Integrity Advisor Education in Hungary

Abstract: In recent years the relation of academic institutions, their research and teaching and the practice of public administration has been widely discussed. The necessary connection between academic work and practice have never been challenged but different concepts have been advanced for their integration. In traditional education faculty members teach their theories and concepts that students have to learn and after the education find ways to apply them in their praxis. The concept is that individual faculty members convey the established knowledge to individual students during the time of the academic program, and within the world of academia that is distinct from the world of praxis. This paper presents model of education that is different from the usual academic education models in three dimensions. The first was, that it could not transmit established knowledge about an established profession but had to create a new practice for a new professional field. This condition led to the two other new dimensions: one was a collaborative curriculum development process, and the other that the process happened across the traditional boundary between academia and practice. I present a dialogic and collaborative model for curriculum development and teaching that extended the role of the university to innovation and knowledge creation for praxis.

Keywords: integrity education, transformative learning, system thinking, multidisciplinary work, competency based education, transformative process, integrity experts, dialogic process

"...coming together to think together because we know that only then can we act together"
Peter Senge

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This paper presents an education model that is different in three dimensions. The first is, that faculty could not transmit established knowledge about an established profession but had to create a new practice for a new professional field. This condition led to the two other new dimensions: one was a collaborative curriculum development process, and the other that the process happened across the traditional boundary between academia and practice. I present a dialogic and collaborative model for curriculum development and teaching whose merit is not only that it could create an integrated curriculum but could also extended the role of the university to innovation and knowledge creation for praxis.

The program the case present is a one year long post-graduate professional education for public integrity advisors. Integrity advisor is a new position in the Hungarian Public administration, and as such, an evolving professional activity and a new field to teach. Public integrity management is a holistic approach to corruption prevention whose aim is to strengthen the resistance of the public organization. Its main tenet is that the rules and the values of the organization need to be developed by a complex organizational development process that apply rule- and value-based instruments in balance. While some rules may be designed in technical processes as well, the value building component of integrity management can only be a collective process. In order to fulfill the double challenge integrity advisors' technical expertise and leadership competence are equally important. They also have to learn to apply these two very different components in an integrated manner.

The case study presents the collaborative curriculum development process whose faculty was composed of three groups of professionals: academics, anti-corruption practitioners and professionals from the fields of organizational development and dialogic processes. Process experts had a double role: (1) to provide leadership for the curriculum development in order to create synergy among the professional fields, (2) to educate students to deliver similar collective processes in their work.

The paper presents a dialogic approach to curriculum design and teaching. It discusses two transformative processes: one that happened during the curriculum development and the other that is planned for students. In both processes the focus is on: How conversations were initiated to build shared aspirations among faculty members and students? How shared language and a shared understanding of the complexity of the integrity development challenge and the system where it has to be achieved evolved? How could the dialogic processes reconstruct relevant concepts of participants and the assumptions about possible instruments? And, how the dialogue among faculty contributed to a new method and regulation regarding public integrity development in the Hungarian Public Administration.

Situating the dialogic model among models of post-graduate academic education

In *traditional academic education* the focus is on the transfer of a body of established theoretical knowledge and the enhancements of students' skills to apply this knowledge and to generate new knowledge. Each academic discipline has a specific language, logic and conceptual frames that students have to acquire and learn to analyze and argument within them. This is the scope of most BA and MA level university education that lay the foundations for a professional life. In post graduate academic programs professionals reenter to the world of academia. According to Kassmüller's (2016) conceptualization the aim of mid-career academic education is to train *bilingual professionals*, who are able to use both the language of theory and practice, and who are not only capable to apply the learned conceptual frames, but later in their career, are also capable to access new theoretical concepts and apply them to their practice. This educational model may be adequate for post-graduate education where one theoretical and one practical field are connected but is problematic in mid-career professional education, when the subject is multidisciplinary and involves complex practices. According to this concept, students should become *multilingual professionals* in order to directly access relevant theory for their profession.

During the last decades many *mid-career professional education programs* went beyond this theoretical knowledge focused concept because professionals formulated strong expectations to receive practice relevant training, and education research also indicated that adult professionals need the feeling of relevance for engaged learning. Increasing number of teachers with *hybrid identities*, that integrate multiple frames of reference into their worldview and value system, joined the faculty of post-graduate programs. (Meyer et al., 2014) Their contribution is that they, mastering the language and logic of one or more theoretical and a practical fields, can select relevant conceptual frames, explain them in, for professionals accessible, language and show how to apply them to practical problems. Thus, they bridge between theory and practice. At the same time, the fact that hybrid professionals entered into faculties did not change two important conditions: the locus of education remained in the world of academia, and between individual teachers and individual students. The academic world remained distinct from the world of practice.

Competency based education programs redirected the focus from theoretical learning to developing students' capacities to execute professional activities. This concept of education is underpinned by the realization that subject matter knowledge is only one part of professional competence. Skills and attitudes also play a role whether students can effectively replicate established professional practices. Personal skill building, like communication, self-awareness, trust building, etc., and practice in executing specific professional practices were included in the competencies based programs. During the education students acquire distinct competencies that belong to the established profession according to individualized learning plans. In many programs students must demonstrate the acquired competencies in practice and have it corroborated by senior professionals. Mid-career competency based programs for specific professional activities establish a more direct relation between education and practice but, similarly to the academic model, they transmit established, hegemonic knowledge and they focus on the individual student.

