

Book Review:

THE FORMATION OF SCHOLARS: RETHINKING DOCTORAL EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

MaryFriend Shepard, Walden University

The inaugural edition of *The Journal of Applied Instructional Design* provides the opportunity to reflect upon and rethink the purposes and role of instructional designers in education. The editor's selection of *The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century* seemed to be an unusual choice for the first book review since it is a reflection on doctoral education in the United States. The wisdom of the choice should not be overlooked. The authors argued that a community of scholars will continually reflect upon its goals and purposes and use them to drive all that it does. While the book was written as an analysis of doctoral programs in higher education, many of the questions and conclusions are equally appropriate to forming scholars who are instructional designers at any level.

Forming scholars was the central thread woven throughout the book and was organized around three themes: scholarly integration, intellectual community, and stewardship. In reflection, I wondered what it meant to form scholars who were effective instructional designers. The questions the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID) emphasized about those seeking a doctorate should be asked by instructional designers to deliberate their purposes. The authors stressed that scholarly integration requires that teaching be viewed through the "lens of research ...and research through the lens of teaching"(2008, p. 10). Instructional designers analyze learning goals and needs to systematically apply instructional and learning theories to the development of curriculum materials. The authors argued that scholarly reflection and conversation about purpose grounded in research is essential if the new challenges of education are to be incorporated with new technologies, global issues, changes in student demographics, and an emphasis on the integration

of academic fields. How best does the instructional designer make decisions between "knowledge-absorption and knowledge creation" (2008, p. 53)? What research questions should instructional designers be asking?

Creating an intellectual community was the second theme in the formation of scholars, with a focus on ways of building collaborative communities as new knowledge is generated and transformed into action. The authors stressed partnerships between faculty and students with an exchange and respect for diverse ideas. A greater degree of accountability is expected between partners in the learning community, and in an open community of scholars one should find a high level of creativity and risk-taking. If facilitating learning is the main purpose in instructional design, then the emphasis should be on communication and collaboration among the various partners to achieve that end. Many questions arise for the instructional designer: How do exciting partnerships grow among all the stakeholders in every aspect of the process? How do we create a lively exchange where new approaches and designs for ID may take place? How do we help learners at all stages of development to generate new knowledge and build skills and insights that transform their society?

Being a steward of the discipline is one of the more compelling ideas posited by the Carnegie team and provides a challenge to instructional designers. Stewards conserve the past as they reflect upon what is considered the most relevant and reliable knowledge and practices. From their understanding of an existing body of knowledge, they generate new knowledge while assessing the knowledge being generated by others. Finally, the authors argued that stewards use

knowledge to transform society while they communicate their ideas to others. Instructional designers need to be stewards of their disciplines as they collaboratively select the knowledge and skills they draw from the past to engage the minds of learners. If instructional designers viewed their role in ID as that of a steward of the discipline, how would what we do be transformed?

Finally, the authors shared three principles they believe guide student development in learning: progressive development in terms of self-initiative and responsibility for learning, the ability to integrate and synthesize knowledge, and collaborative learning (2008, p. 62). The authors provided insight into ways that K12 instruction can help develop early research, collaboration, and critical thinking skills in learners. Multiple examples of strategies for accomplishing these three goals are provided in the second half of the book. The nature of decision-making about the complex issues and problems faced by learners at any level P-16 is too complex to be left to students to figure out on their own.

Perhaps for instructional designers the time has arrived for us to reflect systematically upon the purpose of learning and what those guiding principles should be for 21st century learners. If we accept the assumptions of CID that students can take initiative and responsibility for learning; that they can analyze, synthesize, and evaluate knowledge for action; and that they can work in teams to accomplish a goal that is greater than they could achieve individually, then there are implications for our work. How do we help learners move along the continuum to develop these skills systematically? How do we help students assess how they learn so they become life-long learners? How do we develop instructional materials that help faculty and students engage in activities as co-learners in the process?

The Formation of Scholars offers a fresh look at learning and what it means to be a scholar. Many relevant questions are asked that can challenge an instructional designer to go beyond the obvious goals and outcomes of a specific group to designing exciting and challenging programs. I highly recommend this book to any instructional designer who wants to ask questions of purpose and go beyond the obvious.

Reference

Walker, G. E., Golde, C. M., Jones, L., Bueschel, A.C., & Hutchings, P. (2008). *The formation of scholars: Rethinking doctoral education for the twenty-first century*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.



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