Essay

Educational Philosophy in Pharmacy Education: Starting the Dialogue

EVAN T. ROBINSON*

Shenandoah University School of Pharmacy, 1460 University Drive, Winchester, VA 22601, USA

Education is a changing environment driven by the goals to improve the learner's educational experience. Pharmacy education has demonstrated this through a vast number of publications and presentations at various meetings on issues related to teaching and learning. These scholarly contributions all suggest the personally held philosophical beliefs about education but from various philosophical perspectives ranging from K-12 models to adult education. The intent of this manuscript is to provide a primer on educational philosophy using one particular model, the three philosophical orientations of Juergen Habermas, in the hopes of fostering a dialogue within pharmaceutical education about education. This will be accomplished by defining a common language whereby pharmacy educators can discuss their beliefs, values and assumptions about education with clarity and in a common language.

Keywords: Pharmacy education; Dialogue; K-12 models; Educational philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Education is an ever-evolving iterative process driven by the goal to improve the learner's educational experience. The literature within pharmacy education since the turn of last century mirrors the general education literature in that it has presented alternatives to teaching, learning, assessment, curriculum design and development, and most recently the use of technology in education. Through all the changes, however, there has been a series of constants within education, which include an academician's attitudes, values and assumptions throughout the educational process. According to

Ozmon and Craver (1990) it is these three elements that serve as the foundation for an educational philosophy, which can further be defined as "...not only a way of looking at ideas but also of learning how to use them in the best way." To further differentiate a philosophy of education, "A philosophy of education becomes significant at the point where educators recognize the need to think clearly about what they are doing and to see what they are doing in the larger context of the individual and social development."(Ozmon and Craver, 1990). It is possible to discern what educators are doing by reviewing the literature to identify both current and future classroom trends.

Within the pharmacy education literature there have been numerous publications on the various elements associated with the educational process. For example, according to Hymel and Foss (1990), between the years of 1970 and 1990 more than 200 articles were published that related to instructional issues and methods in pharmacy education. From 1990 to 2000 numerous more articles have been published on a variety of issues regarding educational processes within pharmacy education. In addition to the pharmacy education literature, there are many pharmacy conferences and programs that focus on education, such as the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) annual meeting and the AACP Institute.

A final driver of the future of pharmacy education are the accreditation standards from the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (1993), in which the following statement regarding educational

philosophy can be found: "The mission statement of a College or School should include the College's or School's educational philosophy and how its professional program in pharmacy is designed to insure that graduates will be health care providers prepared for the present and evolving scope of practice of pharmacy, such as primary care." The missing necessary step, however, is providing the faculty with the common means of communication whereby the college or school's educational philosophy can be clearly articulated.

This manuscript is not to infer that pharmacy school faculty are not teaching from a given belief system consistent with an educational philosophy, but instead that the belief system is indeed personal and not shared for the development of a common philosophy for pharmacy education. The intent of this manuscript is to provide a primer on educational philosophy using one particular model in the hopes of fostering a dialogue within pharmaceutical education about education. This will be accomplished by defining a common language whereby pharmacy educators can discuss their beliefs, values and assumptions about education with clarity and in a common language.

With everything that has been put forth regarding teaching and learning, it may be time to discuss how academicians view not only how they teach, but also their beliefs on how they would like to teach. It is their beliefs that govern classroom action and can foster, or prevent, educational change.

Philosophical Orientations

Within the context of education exists an individual's educational philosophy, that can be defined as values, attitudes and assumptions that create the foundation for an individual's decision making. An educational philosophy is the application of philosophical ideas to educational problems and an individual's philosophy helps determine how that individual will relate to a given issue (Ozmon and Craver, 1990; Kaminsky, 1993). It is possible that an educator's philosophy can influence decision making about both the curriculum and instruction and Ozmon and Craver (1990) assert that a teacher's educational philosophy influences all areas of the educational process. According to Pearse (1983), it is also possible that awareness of one's own educational philosophy as well as other educational philosophies may lead an individual to reflect upon the differences, thus facilitating changes in the educational process.

Determining one's own educational philosophy as well as identifying other educational philosophies is not a straightforward process. The educational philosophies identified in the literature come from different disciplines (K-12, adult education, etc.) and use sometimes consistent and other times inconsistent terminology, making the interpretation of educational philosophy difficult. These difficulties could be minimized by the development or utilization of a single framework, such as the application of the three philosophical orientations of Habermas to education.

Habermas first presented his three philosophical orientations (technical, practical, emancipatory) in 1972 in the book entitled *Knowledge and Human Interests*. The three philosophical orientations provide a systematic means by which educational philosophy can both be evaluated and understood (McCarthy, 1978; Outhwaite, 1994). Each of Habermas' philosophical orientations possesses different qualities with respect to the educational process. An overview of the three philosophical orientations follows, while a more comprehensive description of each philosophical orientation appears in the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* in the article entitled "Curricular Transformation I: Theoretical and Philosophical Views Underlying Selected Pharmacy Education Studies."(Anderson-Harper et al., 1996).

Although not written specifically for education, Habermas' philosophical orientations have educational implications (Grundy, 1987). The technical orientation represents a controlled learning environment in which a student has little or no participation in the learning process (Habermas, 1972; Grundy, 1987). In the practical orientation, the teacher is still in control, but involves the student in the learning process through structured or semi-structured activities (Habermas, 1972; Grundy, 1987). Finally, the emancipatory orientation represents an environment in which learning can be entrusted to the student as well as shared with the student by the teacher (Habermas, 1972; Grundy, 1987).

The translation of Habermas' three philosophical orientations to instruction is possible by distinguishing different roles within the instructional process identified in education literature (Grundy, 1987; Kimpston et al., 1992). Each of the three philosophical orientations consists of three aspects of the instructional process: the role of the teacher in the learning process, the role of the student in the learning process, and the interaction between the teacher and the student during the learning process (Grundy, 1987; Kimpston et al., 1992).

The role of the teacher in the learning process relates to what the teacher feels he or she must do to ensure that learning takes place. The role of the student in the learning process comprises the responsibility for learning on the part of the student. Finally, the interaction between the teacher and the student during the learning process identifies the type of communication that takes place. Table I describes the differences between the technical,

TABLE I   Relating Habermas' three philosophical orientations to the aspects of instruction

Domains	Role of teacher	Role of student	Interaction: teacher and student
Technical	Orator	Passive	Minimal interaction
Practical	Facilitator	Active participant	Two-way dialogue
Emancipatory	Co-learner	Co-learner	Collaborative environment

practical, and emancipatory orientations related to the different roles in instruction.

Standardizing the Language: Why Use Habermas' Philosophical Orientations?

Every conversation needs to start from a common frame of reference, a common language that allows for a clear and useful exchange of ideas. According to Schubert (1986), in the case of education, "...[a] philosophy facilitates the clarification of values and language..." that could provide just such a foundation. Think of how difficult it is to communicate with someone speaking a different language; if you have a rudimentary understanding of the language then you pick up bits and pieces of the conversation but may miss a central tenet that is critical to understanding the big picture. One specific example of the need to create a common language was the development of the "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Book 1, Cognitive Domain" by Benjamin Bloom. According to Bloom (1956), "The major purpose in constructing a taxonomy of educational objectives is to facilitate communication" and for "...improving the exchange of ideas and materials among test workers, as well as other persons concerned with educational research and curriculum development". Without knowledge of the language there is little or no chance that any understanding will occur. Habermas' three philosophical orientations were chosen to allow for a common frame of reference or "language" about our philosophical perspectives to encourage conversation that in the past may have been confusing due to multiple frames of reference.

The systematic fashion in which Habermas presents the three philosophical orientations may allow for easier understanding and application of philosophy. Furthermore, the systematic presentation of the three philosophical orientations takes into account other philosophical nomenclature because other philosophies can be recognized within Habermas' orientation continuum. For example, reconceptualism, progressivism, essentialism and constructivism all fit somewhere within Habermas' system. Habermas' diversity and innovative views may be the reason why his work has become widely used in education and educational philosophy. Furthermore, Habermas presents an easy means of discussing philosophical perspectives because his three orientations help minimize the confusing jargon and facilitate a standardizing of the language.

Exemplifying this is the possibility that the three philosophical orientations of Habermas were actually three interrelated paradigms in which a variety of instructional methods relating to each philosophical orientation could be used (Pearse, 1983). According to Pearse, "If one becomes aware of a paradigm, whether conceived in terms of Habermas' triad or another system, and its relationship to competing paradigms, one is more likely to be able to bring it to consciousness for self-criticism and reflection."

The development of Habermas' philosophical orientations occurred over many years and was influenced by numerous individuals from diverse backgrounds (Outhwaite, 1994). Some of the individuals who influenced Habermas' development included the critical theorists Marx, Adorno, Kant and Horkheimer; the works of Nietzsche, Arendt and Freud; and the father of progressivism John Dewey (Outhwaite, 1994; Ostovich, 1995).

Li and Reigeluth (1995) theoretically evaluated the three philosophical orientations to identify how they could benefit the instructional design process. One conclusion reached was that long held beliefs can inhibit the adoption or vision of new instructional possibilities. "Methods of learning, teaching, and design are simply tools to reach the ultimate goal; they are means, not ends, of design efforts" (Li and Reigeluth, 1995). Whatever instructional method is chosen, the individual should remain flexible with respect to later trying other instructional methods that fall within the other philosophical orientations (Li and Reigeluth, 1995).

Conclusion

Within pharmacy education, recommendations have been made to change the methods of instruction to better prepare a future graduate. Schools of pharmacy are being encouraged to change their programs to allow for more student-centered instruction as the student progresses through the program. Pharmacy education may now be at the point where it becomes necessary to move beyond discussing the "how-to" of teaching to the "why" and "what does it mean" of education. A central tenet of changing how teaching is accomplished is to first provide insight into how an individual teaches, how he or she would like to teach, and then to provide the means by which a dialogue on

the differences and the importance of teaching can take place.

Much can be said about improving the educational process, but asking academicians to teach in a student-centered way when their philosophical orientation is teacher-centered may cause an internal conflict that will take time to resolve. The insight to change how an individual teaches may be easier to accomplish than the change itself, thus leading to a slow adoption or even potential resistance.

As much as education change is promoted by the school or organization, the idea of an academician understanding his or her philosophical and instructional orientations is a personal experience that is a combination of introspection and dialogue about what is known and what is important to each individual within the process. The fundamental understanding and discussion about philosophical orientations is worthy of such a dialogue as pharmacy education moves forward and continues to improve its educational processes. Perhaps starting the dialogue with a common framework such as Habermas' philosophical orientations, will provide us with the means to start the dialogue. Who knows the good that can come from an open conversation?

References

American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (1993) *The Proposed Revision of Accreditation Standards and Guidelines for the Professional Program in Pharmacy Leading to the Doctor of Pharmacy Degree* (ACPE, Chicago, IL).

Anderson-Harper, H.M., Kochan, F.K. and Robinson, E.T. (1996) "Curricular transformation I: theoretical and philosophical views underlying selected pharmacy education studies", *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 60, 314–321.

Bloom, B.S. (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook 1, Cognitive Domain* (Longman, New York, NY).

Grundy, S. (1987) *Curriculum: Product or Praxis* (Falmer Press, New York, NY).

Habermas, J. (1972) *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Heineman, London).

Hymel, G.M. and Foss, L. (1990) *Instructional Design in Pharmaceutical Education: A Comprehensive Literature Review. Paper Presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association*, November, New Orleans, LA. ERIC Document #ED329227.

Kaminsky, J.S. (1993) *A New History of Educational Philosophy* (Greenwood Press, Westport, CT).

Kimpston, R.D., Williams, H.Y. and Stockton, W.S. (1992) "Ways of knowing and the curriculum", *The Educational Forum* 56, 153–172.

Li, M.F. and Reigeluth, C.M. (1995) *Critical Analysis of Instructional Design. Presentation at the Annual National Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology*, Anaheim CA., ERIC Document #ED383321.

McCarthy, T.A. (1978) *The Critical Theory of Juergen Habermas* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA).

Ostovich, S.T. (1995) "Habermas, and the University in Society", *Educational Theory* 45, 465–477.

Outhwaite, W. (1994) *Habermas: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA).

Ozmon, H.A. and Craver, S.M. (1990) *Philosophical Foundations of Education*, 4th Ed. (Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, OH).

Pearse, H. (1983) "Brother, can you spare a paradigm? The theory beneath the practice", *Studies in Art Education* 24, 158–163.

Schubert, W.H. (1986) *Curriculum: Perspective, Paradigm, and Possibility* (MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, NY).