



Authenticity In and Through Teaching in Higher Education: The Transformative Potential of the Scholarship of Teaching

Kreber, Carolin
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013

Book Review

Tags: critically reflective teaching | practice of teaching | scholarship of teaching and learning

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This book explores the role of authenticity in higher education. Kreber's work contributes to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning movement, which includes post-secondary educators from a variety of disciplines who emphasize teaching as a scholarly discipline in its own right (Huber and Morreale, *Disciplinary Styles in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Exploring Common Ground* [Washington, D.C.: AAHE] 2002). Kreber criticizes the movement, however, for being insufficiently attentive to issues of power and social justice, and she posits her research as a corrective (5). Authenticity, Kreber argues, involves not only reflective awareness of one's own inner motives and dispositions, but also critical consciousness of the power relations that determine one's place in the social order (26-27, 38-39). Authenticity in teaching promotes awareness of one's positionality as a teacher (50-52, 133-140, 171), and it leads one to serve the best interests of one's students. Authenticity through teaching, meanwhile, defines, and ultimately attains, the students' ultimate interest: coming into their own authenticity. Higher education thus comes to promote a more just and sustainable world (44-49).

Authenticity In and Through Teaching unfolds in eight chapters, plus a conclusion. Chapter 1 engages philosophical and pedagogical literature to interrogate the concept of authenticity. Chapter 2 contains Kreber's core argument, summarized above. In Chapter 3, Kreber explores the implications for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning movement, arguing that it is distinguished from pedagogical theory by its reflective stance: it involves the application of research to one's own teaching practice (75). For these reasons, in Chapter 7 she challenges the notion of the scholarship of teaching as an evidence-based practice. In Chapter 4, she

draws on Alasdair MacIntyre's unique connection between practice and virtue to argue for a moral imperative in teaching practice (MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press] 2007). Chapters 5 and 6 invoke the critical self-reflection inherent to authenticity as a means to counteract the distorting effects of power in the university classroom. Chapter 8, finally, argues that authentic scholarship of teaching and learning demands public engagement.

Operating within the framework of engaged pedagogy, *Authenticity In and Through Teaching* provides a useful, coherent, and comprehensible framework for conceptualizing the practice of teaching. It also serves as a point of entry to contemporary scholarly literature in several disciplines, including pedagogical theory, moral and existential philosophy, and critical social theory. Finally, the moral imperative that Kreber derives from her understanding of authenticity, rooted as it is in virtue theory, would be particularly applicable in liberal arts and seminary contexts (where the moral shaping of the student is part of the educational process). I recommend this book for scholar-teachers who want to expand their awareness of theoretical literature on pedagogy and bring it to bear on their teaching practice.

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