

The Painter and the Cameraman: An Interesting Construct for Considering Educational Change

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Following extensive research, analysis, and deliberation by our governing agencies, our profession is facing a profound change in the educational preparation of athletic trainers. The recent declaration by the Strategic Alliance in support of the entry-level master's degree has created an opportunity for change in the professional preparation of our future students.¹ As often happens following a call for change, concern and anxiety prompt expeditious change action by programs to meet reform standards without careful consideration of the long-term impact on the profession as a whole. As an advocate for purposeful change, I challenge you to reflect upon educational reform through the lens of the painter and the cameraman.

Before initiating any substantive change programmatically, it is important to understand and define the fundamental premise of education as a whole. In his infamous paper, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr contends, "The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society."² It involves complex processes in consideration of the various elements impacting curricular design, implementation, pedagogy, and assessment and evaluation. This comprehensive approach begins with contemplative consideration of all factors inherent and external to the change. Initiating change without careful deliberation may increase efficiency, yet fail miserably to address the needs of the profession in the competitive health care market of the future.

The process of educational reform is complex and multifaceted. It requires close-up analysis of many elements that comprise an academic program, yet also requires a big picture perspective of how these elements fit together to create a whole. A well-known philosopher, Walter Benjamin promotes a wide view and close analysis in deliberations. "The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new

law."^{3(p233-234)} Programmatic reform truly requires both detailed inspection and broad analysis. It requires rich consideration of the finest details and the larger impact of these details. Reform creates opportunities for closely evaluating those elements that are working as well as looking broadly at those elements that need changing.

Using the framework of Benjamin's classic work³ on ethical deliberation to contextualize this perspective, programmatic change can be translated using the constructs of closeness and distance as matters of position and perspective.⁴ Anchored in the philosophical construct of ontology, potential connections are made, challenges are identified, and alternative perspectives are considered in the process. Philosophical ontology represents a body of formally represented knowledge based on a conceptualization: the objects, concepts, and other entities that are assumed to exist in some area of interest and the relationships are held amongst them.⁵ In educational reform, it is essential to understand these conceptualizations and how they impact the greater whole of the profession. Issues such as interprofessional education, clinical immersion, advanced practice skills, evidence-based practice, transition to practice, and postprofessional education are all elements that look different when looking closely than from a broader perspective.

Several strategies for making connections and then drawing back have been promoted to emphasize the need for both the painter and the cameraman perspectives. Specifically, boundary metaphors, such as a highway, bridge, and/or territory, can help educational programs determine the boundaries defined by the educational program.⁶ For example, do we design programs that are efficient, yet do not allow for much exploration along the way (such as a highway), or do we design programs that bridge 1 program to another or 1 level to another perhaps, such as 3:2 or professional to postprofessional degree programs, or do we design programs that define our territory as a specific, limited area of expertise or expansive area of general expertise? As an educator, it is apparent that each of these approaches could greatly impact

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the design and delivery of an entry-level master's program and could have a wide impact on the profession as a whole.

Another perspective that could engage the painter and the cameraman perspectives when considering educational reform is anchored in the construct of relationships.⁷ Relationships established within educational reform can further perpetuate the sense of hegemony and inequities in power or can level or diminish these hierarchical relationships to create a sense of a broader community. As a profession, defining our relationships within the health care community is essential to our survival. As a profession, we want to maximize our connections and determine the best way to contribute substantively to the greater health care system. Looking through a focused, close-up lens, the profession may be very clear on its scope and role. However, when the panoramic view of the professional relationships is considered, it may look very different. It is imperative to carefully reflect on both images to ensure the desired picture you want to secure.

As a profession, it is essential that we do not become known as lemmings that are believed to follow each other mindlessly off cliffs during mass migrations often with the result of mass demise. As a profession, we need to stand back and look at the big picture and how it fits into the greater health care system and create programs that are designed to meet these demands. Failing to “be the painter” could potentially create a future where our profession is facing the same challenges we face today. Taking the cameraman's perspective, it is our obligation to look closely at the feasibility, goals, projected outcomes, and more importantly, our unique place in the educational preparation of athletic trainers before we follow others simply for the sake of transitioning to the new standards. Being able to have respectful dialogue about emergent constructs inherent in change will provide a foundation for stronger, more firmly grounded educational programs in our future. It is our professional obligation to all of our stakeholders to carefully take both a painter and

cameraman perspective on educational reform prior to committing to creating more of the “same.”

The true beauty of art is in the eye of the beholder. The true beauty of art is the authentic presentation and perspective of each piece. This is 1 of our rare opportunities to reconceptualize our programs and our profession as a whole. If we view educational reform through these lenses, I am confident it will hold its value well into the future. However, if we rush to be like all the others, we risk becoming lemmings struggling to migrate to a safe environment through recurrent mass migrations yet suffering notable population fluctuations in the process.⁸

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