

Roundtable: Understanding threshold concepts: The importance of disciplinary history.

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As educators, we want our students to be transformed by the 'big ideas' of the profession, but when students struggle, the temptation to simplify those ideas can be hard to resist. A common way to simplify is to remove any sense of the errors and dilemma, contexts and misconceptions, which gave rise to the 'big ideas'. Drawing on Perkins's (2006) idea of troublesome knowledge, we wonder if some disciplinary ideas are particularly hard to grasp because students do not appreciate the history of those ideas? Past errors and dilemmas have something profound to tell us about the threshold concepts (Land, Cousin, Meyer & Davies, 2005) of a discipline.

In this roundtable, we will briefly share our 'take' on the relevance of history in our own disciplines (allied health) and invite participants to reflect on the foundational ideas and paradigmatic shifts in their disciplines, and the possible influence these may have on learners' understandings. Possible questions to be explored by participants during this roundtable include:

- What were your discipline's historical beginnings? How were they shaped by the socio-political context of the time?
- Over time how has your discipline been influenced by surrounding forces/ contexts?
- Have some early ideas about your discipline been forgotten or discarded?
- Are any new developments in your discipline consistent with its beginnings?
- Is there a link between your discipline's historical beginnings and possible/ potential threshold concept/s ? (What? Why?)
- Would an appreciation of the historical beginnings of your discipline trigger transformation in the learners, and if so how?
- If history is important, what does this mean for developing the curriculum?

References

- Land, R., Cousin, G., Meyer, J. H., & Davies, P. (2005). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (3): implications for course design and evaluation. In C. Rust (Ed.), *Improving Student Learning Diversity and Inclusivity*. (pp. 53-64). Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.
- Perkins, D. (2006). Constructivism and troublesome knowledge. In J. Meyer & R. Land (Eds.), *Overcoming barriers to student understanding: Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge* (pp. 19-32).