

Opening Plenary – ‘Threshold Concepts in Practice’

Plenary Paper 2

Integrated Threshold Concept Knowledge

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Abstract

In this paper we propose the empirical and social construction of Integrated Threshold Concept Knowledge (ITCK) at the ‘intersection’ of specific transformational (and related) subject content with associated different ‘types of knowledge’. Captured in ITCK is the dynamic interplay between different ‘types of knowledge’ arising primarily from analyses for, and of, threshold concepts; consequent articulation of their ‘critical features’, knowledge of how these are experienced cognitively, affectively, and ontologically (in varying degrees) by students in the liminal state and, finally, how a fusion of these different forms of knowledge translate into in situ ‘threshold concept representations’, contributing in effect to a repertoire of student-centred ‘responses’.

The genesis of knowledge that is broadly of this form lies in the writings of Shulman and Marton c.1985 that were independently focused in that period on the need to develop a (subject) content-based amalgam of know-ledge, -how, and -why, to drive reforms in school teacher education and classroom practice. Three decades later an analysis of these writings provides an historical analogy and some foundation for contemporary arguments developed here within the Threshold Concepts Framework.

ITCK develops a new, or enriches an existing, learning and teaching philosophy that is personal and discipline-based: Personal in emphasising attitudes and values; sense of self in relation to students, individual differences in their learning, and their learning wellbeing. Discipline-based in emphasising sense of self (academic identity, ‘being’) in relation to discipline; thinking and practising that reflects its ‘inner logic’, its characteristic modes of discourse, reasoning, analysis and explanation.