RESPONDING TO THE CHANGING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LANDSCAPE OF RADIOGRAPHY EDUCATION: HOW NEW EDUCATIONAL THEORY HAS INFLUENCED THE RADIOGRAPHY CURRICULUM AND ITS ENACTMENT.

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Relentless changes in healthcare policy, professional and social expectations of radiography practitioners have resulted in a curriculum which is buffeted, confused and questionable. Such conditions demand new and creative ways of developing the radiography curriculum and its enactment. In this seminar I proffer an account of how my research has engaged and developed education theory within the context of radiography education. At an institutional level the findings have motivated a radiography education community to take a wider view of their curriculum. Historically there had been a clear focus on knowledge content and curriculum as a product which failed to take into account praxis and the social context in which learning takes place. Specific curriculum developments include: (i) placing a greater emphasise on the vocational relevance of radiography knowledge; (ii) gaining a better understanding of tacit radiography knowledge; (iii) raising awareness of cultural competence. At a national level the findings have been used in a professional body guidance document which aims to enhance the standard of clinical supervision of radiography students. The conceptual framework was developed via a critical review of the literature and via reflections on my experiences of being a radiography student, radiography practitioner and radiography educator. I concluded that radiography knowledge and skills derived meaning in the act of practice, and this chimed with Wenger’s (1998) rejection of a theory/practice divide in everyday practice. Wenger likewise acknowledges that its historical and social context gives meaning and structure to the act of performing that practice, thus emphasising that practice is embedded in social activity. From these premises I made two propositions: Firstly, the ‘ideological’ function of a radiography curriculum and secondly, that radiography education is located and develops within a community of practice (CoP). The findings evidenced both convergence and divergence with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theoretical constructs of situated learning, legitimate peripheral participation and community of practice. In addition the project also highlighted the consequence of power relationships, the complexity of learning in and across multiple communities of practice and the importance of individual learner biographies, all of which are underdeveloped in Lave and Wenger’s theoretical discourse. My story facilitates a reflection on the nature of radiography practice, its relations with theory and how pedagogy can act as a vehicle for change.