

Creativity versus routinisation: Critical reflections on the role of the learning adviser

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How do learning advisers keep alive a creative and critical edge in the work we do? A compulsion for students to make rapid progress is built into the experience of academic learning in the contemporary tertiary environment. In response to this we can find ourselves teaching routinised procedures that will help students get through their assignments as efficiently as possible. However, this kind of teaching may be achieved at the cost of a certain creative and productive chaos that is an important part of learning. A thoughtful response to this dilemma requires us to maintain a critical engagement with the educational context in which we operate. We need to continue to reflect on what it is we are aiming to achieve, and what education more generally is for. In a practical sense, we need to find ways of teaching that keep rich and valuable processes in play, even as we attempt to pass on neat packages of skills. The cultural studies literature on education (Giroux, 2004; Horner, 2000; O'Shea, 1998) reminds us of the critical and transformative value of our work. From the field of cognitive psychology, Claxton's (1999) understanding of the qualities of successful learners suggests a productive framework for positive change. In response to these diverse literatures, this paper presents a negotiation of the tensions between productive chaos and premature control, patience and haste, and creative vs. routinised teaching.

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