

## Chapter 5

# Pedagogical Values in Online and Blended Learning Environments in Higher Education

**Sophia Palahicky**

*Royal Roads University, Canada*

**Donna DesBiens**

*Royal Roads University, Canada*

**Ken Jeffery**

*Royal Roads University, Canada*

**Keith Webster**

*Royal Roads University, Canada*

### ABSTRACT

*Pedagogical values directly affect student performance and, therefore, are essential to successful teaching practice. It is absolutely critical that post-secondary educators examine and reflect on their pedagogical values because these principles pave the path for student success. This chapter describes four pedagogical values that are critical to student success within the context of online and blended learning environments in higher education: 1) value of care; 2) value of diversity; 3) value of community; and 4) value of justice.*

### INTRODUCTION

Many educators venture into the field without taking time to reflect on the pedagogical values they bring with them to the learning environment. When educators talk about pedagogy, often teaching strategies and assessment practices become the main topics of discussion. However, the pedagogical values that underpin specific educational practices are based in our worldviews, beliefs, perspectives, and biases

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about teaching and learning. What do you deem to be necessary for student success in various learning environments, and why? What do you deem to be important, and why? What do you deem to be beneficial, and why? Articulating your pedagogical values depends on critical reflection on such questions. So, why is it important to articulate our pedagogical values? In the big picture, broad knowledge about values serves as the foundation to a democratic educational experience (Heasley, 2015). On an individual level, this is important because the act of teaching is imbued with values as it encompasses ongoing personal choices in action, judgement, and evaluation (Gudmundsdottir, n.d.).

What educators believe about teaching and learning is critically important, because values drive practices that may be beneficial – or not – for learner success. What pedagogical values guide your own choices, actions, judgements, and evaluative decisions in your teaching practice? What worldviews, beliefs, and perspectives inform your values? Before responding to these questions, educators must first acknowledge that pedagogical decisions, actions, and behaviors aren't solely related to the development of content or design and development of learning activities. It is imperative that educators reflect on how they interact with students, how they engage students, how they support students, and how they aide in the holistic development of students, versus merely addressing content and outcomes (Lovat, Dally, Clement & Toomey, 2011). This chapter examines four essential pedagogical values that enhance student success: ethics of care, diversity, community, and justice.

We propose that when educators critically reflect on their pedagogical values, they can increase their effectiveness in building engaged, creative, and inclusive learning environments. Philosopher and educator Toulmin (1996) observes that we need well-founded ethical judgement to describe, explain, and improve practices in human studies, due to clear moral and political implications in their effects on people's lives. Toulmin also reminds us that criticism of value commitments in any science only have "bite" when assumptions, beliefs, and biases are not made explicit. In our view, the Western democratic ideals of education that emphasize inclusion and equitable participation are worth pursuing. One early statement of these ideals is Dewey's (1916) conception of education as a social process to create a desirable society, i.e. one that

*makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through...equitably distributed interests. (p. 63, 64)*

In one contemporary framing of these ideals, Veletsianos and Kimmons (2012) identify open scholarship values for the ideals of *democratization, fundamental human rights, equality, and justice* and *highlight challenges associated with the movement's aspirations of broadening access to education and knowledge*, such as the commodification of MOOCs, and unequal access to technology and/or lack of digital literacies. Veletsianos and Kimmons propose that,

*scholars need to develop an understanding of participatory cultures and social/digital literacies in order to take full advantage of open scholarship.*

## **Participatory Worldview**

Educational researchers Reason and Bradbury (2001) state the participative worldview recognizes that being human means we are engaged in practical being and acting, always in relationship with others, and that our actions are grounded in our "inner work." These authors define participatory research (PR) as a:

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