



Dr Sarah Rawlinson
"A shared epistemology of work-based learning and learning that takes place in the university".



College of Business

The Skills Gap

- Employers are concerned that young people leaving colleges and universities often lack the knowledge, commitment and business awareness they require.
- Employers have long expressed frustration with university products.
- Many state that universities are out of touch with the needs of business and operate in isolation from the world of work.
- Universities counter these criticisms by arguing that it is not their primary purpose to prepare students for job-specific roles. There is some resistance to the relationship between higher education and industry with universities considering it a challenge to academic freedom and a move towards training students for employment, rather than educating them to be useful citizens for society as a whole.



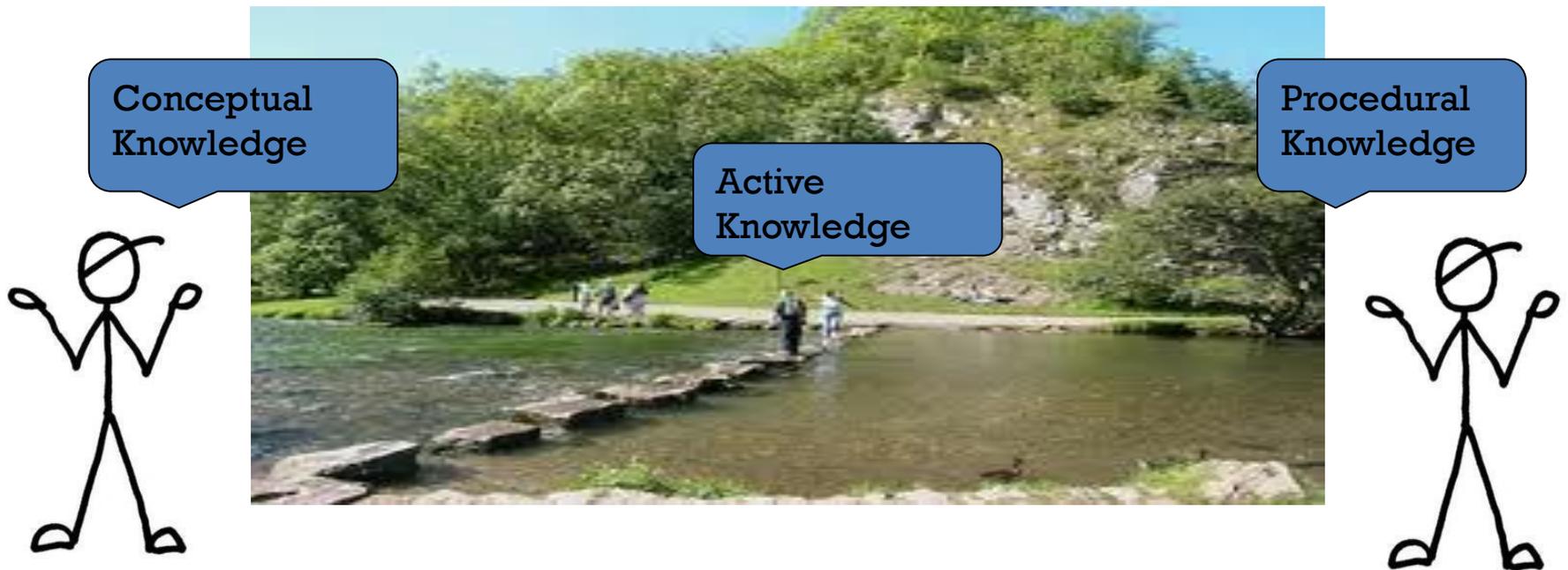
Using a teaching and learning strategy to address the skills gap

- The transfer of knowledge and skills in new situations and contexts is not easy and therefore the teaching and learning strategy advocated in this model is that students are taught to transfer knowledge and solve problems in “real world learning” contexts.
- The model makes the transfer of conceptual knowledge and procedural knowledge central to the teaching and learning strategy of vocational degrees.
- Developing strategies to teach the transfer of knowledge to the work place and to value knowledge learnt in the work place is complex.



Curriculum Design and the Skills Gap

Universities have devised vocational degrees that separate out conceptual knowledge from the skills and knowledge of the work process (procedural knowledge) and use work placements to engage students in the procedural knowledge required at work.



Work Placement

- One effective approach to improving the awareness of the workplace has been the placement of students into employment during their degree studies e.g. sandwich programmes.
- Participation in sandwich programmes, for a range of reasons, have declined significantly since the 1960s. Overall, the HE sector does not fully recognise the need or value of vocationalising degree programmes.
- Peach (2010 p449) refers to socially critical vocationalism (SCV) as *“neither training nor pure traditional academic provision but an approach to curriculum that is academically defensible, practically relevant and socially responsive and may therefore go some way towards resolving the academic versus vocational tensions in higher education.”*



The Teaching and Learning Strategy

