

Book Review

Fox, R. (2011). *The use of self: The essence of professional education*, Chicago: Lyceum Books Inc.

Reviewed by Veronica L. Hardy, PhD, LCSW
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

The Use of Self: The Essence of Professional Education (2011) provides insight into the process of creative teaching pedagogy. The author, Dr. Raymond Fox, is currently a professor within the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University. For approximately fifteen years, he has been actively involved in conveying information about teaching methods and curriculum through workshops and seminars for university faculty. Furthermore, he has several publications to his credit, including scholarly journal articles, book chapters, and three books. To develop this current text, Fox has drawn from his experience in professional education to communicate the benefits of self-awareness and the use of diverse teaching techniques in the classroom environment. As a result, the book is divided into three parts that address the themes of teaching and learning in relation to self-awareness, the process of teaching, and methods that can promote reflection amongst students.

Part One of this writing speaks to the fluidity of teaching and how the educator can integrate the roles of self and practitioner into transactions with students. This is encouraged through evaluation, modeling, and allowing “teachable moments” (p. 14) that promote a student’s deeper engagement with the content. Fox further connects the classroom process as the means for students to transition into professional practice with clients. Next, Part Two provides educators with insight on how to enable students to function as professional

practitioners. In addition, Part Three provides a combination of six applied techniques that promote personal reflection, interrelation with classmates, and interaction with clients. The techniques are: journaling, movies, storytelling, case/critical incident, photography and art, and role playing.

The author provides multiple examples of teaching strategies that reflect the educational goals. For example, as social work includes several types of writing, such as process recordings and journaling, Fox describes methods that are student-centered, enhance self-awareness, and incorporate the professional knowledge base. Overall, writing is noted as a reflective technique that addresses the course learning objectives. Next, the case method is used to promote critical thinking and engage the student with experiences related to professional practice. The author addresses case selections that are consistent with “students’ level of development” (p. 127). The case method should engage students in skills such as problem-solving, reflection, and application. As a result, this text outlines methods that educators can apply in the classroom and through course assignments to enhance students’ ability to recognize factors impacting clients, analyzing various systems, and applying theoretical knowledge.

In conclusion, *The Use of Self: The Essence of Professional Education*, has several strengths that can contribute to facilitating a reflective learning experience for students.

For example, the author stresses the transfer of knowledge between classroom learning and professional practice. Furthermore, he encourages the integration of experiential learning opportunities into the teaching pedagogy through six methods that promote activity and reflection. Based on the information and applicable strategies noted throughout this text, it is recommended that this book be used for training of faculty regarding teaching pedagogy, course development, and methods of assessing student growth within the social work profession.