

Should Teachers be trained as they are supposed to teach?

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Abstract

In this panel discussion the position will be defended that the ideal of constructionistic learning does not necessarily imply that teacher education is entirely oriented around constructionistic learning approaches as well. The thesis is that instructional skills are needed to make young teachers aware of the spectrum system- / learner control and that explicit moments of direct instruction are needed to make pupils sensitive on how to cope with procedural skills and acquire uniform directives as well. The panel presentation will illustrate how mobile devices may finally help in whispering via a Bluetooth earphone critical keywords between peer teacher students.

1. Introduction

The recent ideas on how to promote genuine learning have caused turbulent consequences recently. Its essence is that the delicate moment of understanding and capturing “new” knowledge can hardly be orchestrated effectively by external conditions as its success relies on the learner’s capacity to organize his/her own mental repertoire. Adjacent to this rather drastic abdication of optimistic instructional measures in the five decades before, it is now our full ambition to instigate learners’ metacognitive skills so that learning involves the manifestation of learning skills and mastery of the domain issues as well.

Sharp advocates of constructivism rather than instructivism have started wondering however how learning skills and attitudes are supposed to be facilitated. Indeed it has led to the exciting conclusion that learning to learn involves coaching and social contexts anyway. In other words: The shift towards cognitive constructivism has only intensified the need for high quality learning “spaces” and “events” as well.

One typical new aspect of the instruction towards learning skills is its highly individual nature; Students build upon earlier learning experiences and they have to cope with rather typical learning styles as well.

In order to capture this idiosyncratic nature of learners’ profiles it is necessary to make teacher students aware of critical variables at this point. Before going into those details it is essential however to answer the question in the title: Should teacher students be trained in the way as they are supposed to teach their students?

2. Building upon Intuitive Teaching Styles

The position I will initially defend in the panel is that teacher students need to bridge the gap between their actual intuitive teaching style (mainly developed during the many years that they underwent the traditional teaching style as students themselves) and experiencing the new more idealistic style due to active learning and constructivistic learning as now proclaimed in the more recent learning theories.

3. Talent as a Risk

The second notion to be included is that teacher education is the start of a continuous process that is hopefully never ending as students tend changing and especially the culture that decides how students express themselves. The counter-intuitive mechanism that I would like to convey here is that young successful “natural talents” in teacher education may be weak in continuous learning, while the students who had considerable problems in the beginning were forced to adapt to the outer criteria. Exactly this nature that prevents teachers to attribute negative experiences to “the extremely weak students this year” will be a blessing for their longer-term career. For this sake it is an extra agenda to not only mitigate teacher-students in a smooth progress from simple to the more complex,

but also to let them confront situations that are beyond the level of their control.

4. Coping with Critical Situations

The research that is planned focuses exactly on this aspect of coping with critical situations. The new thing is that we will use a Bluetooth headset for allowing a close peer student to whisper some words if the didactic repertoire of the candidate teacher seems to fail at that very moment. The experiments that are planned this coming summer pretend to find optimal matches between teacher students' apprehension of the pupils' behavior, mimics and answers to questions at

one side and good teacher practices at the other side. The trusted co-student is expected to anticipate to the candidate teacher and asks him/herself what essential words are best to bring the teacher on track.

5. Coaching Behavior Anyway

The essential question for discussion now is: do we allow new-coming teachers to be trained in a behaviorist way, even if their final teaching style to their students is supposed to be a constructivistic one?