

The idiographic paradigm shift needed: Bringing the person back into research and practice - Abstract

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Abstract

Self-efficacy, self-directedness, self-regulation, autonomy, and self-control –inter alia– have all been around for decades. While such concepts may differ, they share a quintessential element which is the “self” component. As we currently stand, we are not short of theories around the importance of the “self” or the student who has become the center of all initiatives for improving education over the last decades. Furthermore, we have a vast count of empirical studies, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses of intervention that promise meaningful intervention. Yet, the quest to bring real changes on the ground has so far fell short of promise. The reasons pertain to the discord between how research is conducted, assessed, or applied. While we –theoretically– embrace and emphasize the value of the “self” or “student” as a central point of departure from existing methods or theories, research is conducted by using data from a “group” of many others. That is, data are collected from a sample of students to explore their inter-individual differences and their average behavior to derive generalizable laws or norms. Such norms are expected to apply to everyone, and the lessons learnt from studying others are expected to be generalizable. Nonetheless, such group data, are barely –if at all– represent any single person, ergo a paradigm shift is needed to bring the very person into our approach to research and practice. We show how data can be collected to model the within-person behavior and learning process. Such analysis is more representative of the “self”, offer more valid inferences about the personal processes and a better potential for personalizing and adapting education.

Keywords

learning analytics, idiographic, within-person

References

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