Guiding processes of learning and choosing forms of teaching

Work file 4: Five basic forms of teaching and learning

The five methodical approaches describe, as it were, five ideal types of settings for interaction between teachers and students.

Each of these approaches allows, or requires, teachers and students to react to and co-operate with one another in different ways.

The approaches are arranged on a scale beginning with a classic form of teacher-centred work (teaching by presentation), and then move on to increasingly student-centred forms.

We do not propose that teacher-centred forms be completely substituted by student-centred forms. Rather, we would argue that a mixture of these forms is adequate, and that, in the long run, a shift towards more student-centred forms of teaching and learning should take place.

A superficial viewer might come away with the impression that student-centred work means increasing idleness on the teacher's side. This, however, is not the case. The teacher's role changes, as will be explained in detail, but his or her role shifts from direct action in the classroom to careful preparation, assistance and supervision, rather increasing in the process than diminishing.

Students who are to learn how to learn should ideally be supported by all their teachers in all their subjects. A project of this magnitude must fall short if it were confined to an island of, say, project work in an ocean of methodical monotony endlessly repeating "teaching by presentation", condemning students to rote learning.

Basic forms of teaching and learning shown here are:

- teaching by presentation;
- guided exploratory learning (class discussion);
- open learning;
- individual teaching;
- learning in projects.

Form of teaching and learning	Activities	Typical features
Teaching by presentation	Narration, lecture, reading to the class, report, exposition, showing, displaying, teaching by example, demonstrating	– I (the teacher) can teach the subject-matter directly, according to the given situation in class, and the students' reactions are immediately evident. – All students are to achieve the same objective – in the same period of time, in the same room and setting, by the same method, and by the same means. – Pre-set subject-matter is passed on to the students.
Guided exploratory learning (class discussion)	Dialogue, questions, impetus, stimuli, guidance, support	– Interplay of expositions and stimuli by the teacher and contributions by the students.

Open learning	Teacher: advice, mediation, support Students: selection, planning, asking questions, discovering, research, drafting, designing, analysing, thinking, checking, controlling	– Students may participate in decisions. – Interests, needs and initiatives on behalf of the students have high priority. – Learning environment encourages students' activities (flexible allocation of room and space, a wide variety of learning materials, a corner for experimenting, painting, etc.). – Open arrangement of settings for learning. – Students are offered a variety of topics and materials for their personal choice. – External settings for learning are included. – Free choice of learning activities. – Individual work, or with a partner or in groups. – Open learning involves and encourages self-determination, personal responsibility, research, spontaneity, context-orientation.
Individual teaching	Teacher: diagnosis, guidance, instruction, support, advice, information, controlling, supervision, motivation Students: selection, modification and development of working programme, reading, achievement, review and evaluation	– The setting for teaching and learning is specified to meet the student's needs (as defined by the student's previous knowledge, abilities (skills and talents), interest, social and family background, etc.). – Optimal adjustment of all the elements in the learning process to the individual student's needs and abilities, that is, of requirements, objectives, procedures, methods, time, media, and aids (multi-dimensional specification). – Didactic materials, support by media (computers, learning software, video clips, worksheets, models, pictures for learners, textbooks, etc.). – Individual learning encourages efficiency, economy of time and effort, a systematic approach, independence of mind and personal responsibility.

Learning in projects	Teacher: mediation, observation, advice, stimulation, support, organisation, co-ordination Students: setting objectives, co-operation, planning, discussion, mutual agreement, collection of data and information, asking questions, application, studies, experiments, tests, modification, design, creativity, production, controlling, evaluation	– The students' shared interests, concerns and objectives are decisive for the choice of topic, approach, and tasks. – A (complex) genuine problem, taken from real life as perceived by the students, both male and female, serves as a starting point. – Priority is given to the production of results, and an interdisciplinary (cross-curricular) approach. – Students are encouraged to draw on their personal experience, learning is linked to practice in real life. – Long-term enterprise which runs through a typical order of stages and phases (initiative – assessment of interests and needs – decision on objectives – definition of limits, that is, exclusion of objectives which cannot be achieved – draft of project; planning – final schedule; execution; review and outlook on forthcoming activities after the project, controlling and perfection, evaluation). – Division and assignment of tasks: individual work, with partners, in small and large groups; co-operation. – Students visit sites outside school, and consult their parents and/or experts. – Project work encourages independence of mind and learning by discovery, personal and practical experience, and social interaction with others. – Teaching and learning encourage students to take action.