

SCHOOL REFORM EFFORTS: THE NEED FOR STUDENT- CENTERED INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The benefit of standards-based education reform is the local decision-making which gives communities a chance to take ownership of the educational outcomes of the students they serve. Schools have demonstrated the success of individual renewal efforts. Nonetheless, school reform is recognized as having a better chance of success when the learning organizations encourage individual school staff to collaborate in problem-solving to create growth-enhancing environments. The author asserts that the connection between student needs and instructional focus is pivotal to transform schooling. Collective leadership addresses the need for student-centered instruction because it is defined by the degree to which control of teaching and learning is based on collective responsibility and shared influence among stakeholders and their role within groups. Examples from scholars and the author's work are entwined throughout to exemplify past efforts of school reform.

Key Words: Student-centered instruction, school reform, educational policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rationale for the student-centered approach (Weimer, 2013) requires more creativity in the classroom and curriculum development since the disciplines (i.e., Math and Language Arts) have played a dominant role. The disconnect between the classroom and state and local agencies ideas of what should be taught, teachers must be a part of the decision-making process because teachers can weigh in on what should be taught and how students are engaged in learning activities (Cushner, McClellan & Stafford, 2015). If teacher does not have an opportunity to teach what they feel is necessary, the curriculum is not student-centered and will be of no use. Giving teachers time to collaborate and understand how amplifying issues around the achievement gap can improve student-centered instruction and possibly learning outcomes. To examine the current degree to which school reform efforts pay attention to curriculum and student voice, research conducted by UNESCO (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) found that to encourage teachers to teach to student-centered instruction instead of culturally mismatched teaching reduced the achievement gap.

Creativity in the classroom improves student engagement, exploring concepts, taking risks, and developing a deeper understanding of the curriculum (Hill, 2021; Darling-Hammon, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead, & Boschee, 2012). Therefore, it is important to combine the curriculum in understandable terms including the more didactic approaches (i.e., improving on the direct instruction methods already in place) along with structured instructions in, the newer teaching strategies Teacher training and ongoing

support are needed to improve learning outcomes (Hill, 2021). Research indicates that there is a need for a process that will at least bring the recommended, the written, and the taught curricula into closer alignment. The curriculum guide has components that include specific learning objectives and activities suggested for each objective (Darling-Hammond, 2015). It is intentionally designed to meet district and state standards by incorporating strategies for specific subject areas utilizing Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012). Nonetheless, teachers increased time to collaborate with their colleagues demonstrate instructional benefits from learning new strategies (Hill, 2021).

2. AUTHENTIC INSTRUCTION

Taking an authentic look at educational practice could potentially require focused attention on education policy to a focus on learning. One of the reasons behind this shift is the idea that the learning appears to demonstrate academic disparities (Darling-Hammond, 2015) be more open and less constrained than the language of education. While educational policy tends to focus on the activities and intentions testing and teacher accountability (Biesta, 2011). Moreover, the higher chance of conflict between students and teachers can result in the comfortable level that the teacher has with regard to educating students from different demographics and diverse cultures (Gay, 2005 Irvine, 2003). Social and educational movements reflect the diversity of opinion and present in a society. Reform movements are effective in changing societal institutions as the attention they attract and the feasibility of programs they purpose and stimulate (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012). Schools need to make progress and students need to have educational options with choices that value their cultural assets, and have supportive environments conducive to learning.

The way people learn generally have to do with their preferences. Some students are auditory, kinesthetic, visual, or sensory learners. Learning styles are influenced by culture, language and behaviors. Research conducted by Keefe and Languis (1983) suggested:

Learning style is that consistent pattern of behavior and performance by which an individual approaches educational experience. It is the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective and psychological behaviors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with responds to the learning environment. It is formed in the deep structure of neural organization and personality that molds and is molded by human development and the cultural experience of home, school and society (p. 1).

Education is necessary for democracy (Walker, 2018). Competency testing and standardizing the curriculum have become the norm. A transition to a new, the more student-centered model (Weimer, 2013) could be a paradigm shift in instructional approach. Furthermore, learning cultures (Howard, 2020; Gay, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994) are different from learning contexts or learning environments in that they are to be understood as the social practices through which people learn. Learning cultures, therefore, do not exist objectively, but only in function of concrete practices of learning. This requires that the study of learning needs to,

'follow the learning.' In the cultural theory of learning (Howard, 2020), learning itself is seen as practical, embodied and social. This becomes even more important when the cultural approach is utilized for the improvement of educational processes and practices. It is argued that in such cases we need to move from the notion of learning cultures to the notion of educational cultures (Gay, 2005; Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016; Husband, & Hunt, 2015; Kang & Chang, 2016). An educational culture is defined as a learning culture that is framed by particular purposes (Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). A cultural approach therefore not only provides new ways for educational research and educational improvement but also highlights that both research and improvement can only proceed on the basis of judgments about what counts as good or desirable learning (Biesta, 2011). Perception and categorization are the results of socialization, and students perceive the world as they categorize information about people and things in our environment in particular ways (Parham, 2002). Outside of the classroom and in the community the structures are not there, and perception are formed based on the person sharing their own experiences (Banks, 1994, Gay 2005, Paik, 2015) and potentially influencing students to have the same understanding, which limits socialization.

3. CONCLUSION

To conclude, addressing the needs of the students can convey the differences between independent and dependent learners by providing students differentiated instruction and the proper implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Learning style is developed in the context of what we attend to (perception) and how the importance of these qualities for teachers lies in their ability to identify preferred modes of learning and to adapt instruction so that all students get to practice learning in multiple ways (Banks, 1944; Elias et al., 1997). Reform effort may benefit from taking a deeper look at the policy implications impact practice. School systems will experience an increase in student success when the teachers stress the importance of relationship before rigor (Hill, 2021) and adapting curriculum to meet the needs of students. Adopting continuous improvement will allow for much-needed innovations and critical reflection about the teaching practice, which could expand opportunity, growing a national economy, and ensuring student success. Instructional delivery curriculum and instruction have to embrace these changes and think critically and solve problems. Having practices that engage the community and encourage shared decision-making will improve reform efforts and ultimately enhance the learning experiences for students to prepare them for their global futures.

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