

Reconstructing Learners' Understanding of Education

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Abstract

At present, when interaction between civilizations turns to be more and more intensive, integration into world life and universal culture becomes essential for the modern competent citizen. As educators we need to make fundamental changes in the educational system which will enhance the students' mutual understanding and social integration, develop their intercultural competence and tolerance towards other nations, as well as encourage lifelong learning and freedom of movement. For students to be competitive in the local and international labour market, it is necessary to revise various educational issues, such as aims and objectives of teaching, modernisation and improvement of textbooks and curricula making them less theoretical and more practical.

The paper attempts to reveal current crucial problems in the sphere of education and suggests some differentiated approaches to learning.

Key words: education, educational system, differentiated approach to learning, application of new technologies, constructivism, mobility.

Introduction

*“If we teach today's students as we did yesterday's,
we rob them of tomorrow.”*

(John Dewey)

Modern developing and rapidly transforming society needs morally and mentally tempered, well-educated risk-takers, who can make their own responsible decisions in various situations of choice, predicting the possible consequences. They should obtain the ability of cooperation, distinguished mobility, dynamism, constructivism, as well as have a strong sense of responsibility for the fate of the country and respect towards the other nations.

The concept of modernization of educational system in Armenia defines social demands to the schooling. From this perspective, the most important task

of the school is the formation of full-fledged citizens of the country. The solution to this task depends largely on what grown-ups will do in their further life, what profession they will choose, and whether or not they will be able to use their inner potential and education in real life. Schools should develop learners' cognitive interests and abilities to inculcate the key competencies required for future self-learning.

The transformation and modernization of the content of education in Armenia at the current stage of society development is closely linked to innovation processes of foreign language teaching organization. The priority direction of development of the modern school has become a humanistic orientation of teaching, in which personal potential takes the leading role. It takes into consideration the needs and interests of the learners, as well as the implementation of a differentiated approach to learning.

Transformation and Modernization of Education

Today the learner's personality and unique inner world are in the spotlight. Therefore, the main purpose of the modern teacher is to choose methods and forms of organization of learning activities so that they optimally correspond to the goal of personality development.

In recent years, the question of the application of new technologies at school has increasingly risen. Not only cutting-edge technical facilities but also new forms and methods of teaching, novel approaches to the learning process are in the scope of the educators' interest. The main objective of foreign language teaching becomes the formation and development of the communicative culture of pupils and practical mastery of foreign language learning. The graph below illustrates educational needs of the modern learner in general.



The task of the teacher is to create conditions of practical language acquisition for each learner and to boost students' individual activity and creativity. The forms of blended learning/teaching programs during foreign language lessons include learning vocabulary; practicing pronunciation and grammatical phenomena; training dialogic and monologic speech; teaching writing (Caulfield 2001:18-22).

Nowadays, the possibilities of using Internet resources are enormous. The Internet as a global network creates fertile environment for obtaining any necessary information for learners and teachers held anywhere in the world.

Using the Internet at English lessons can solve a variety of didactic tasks:

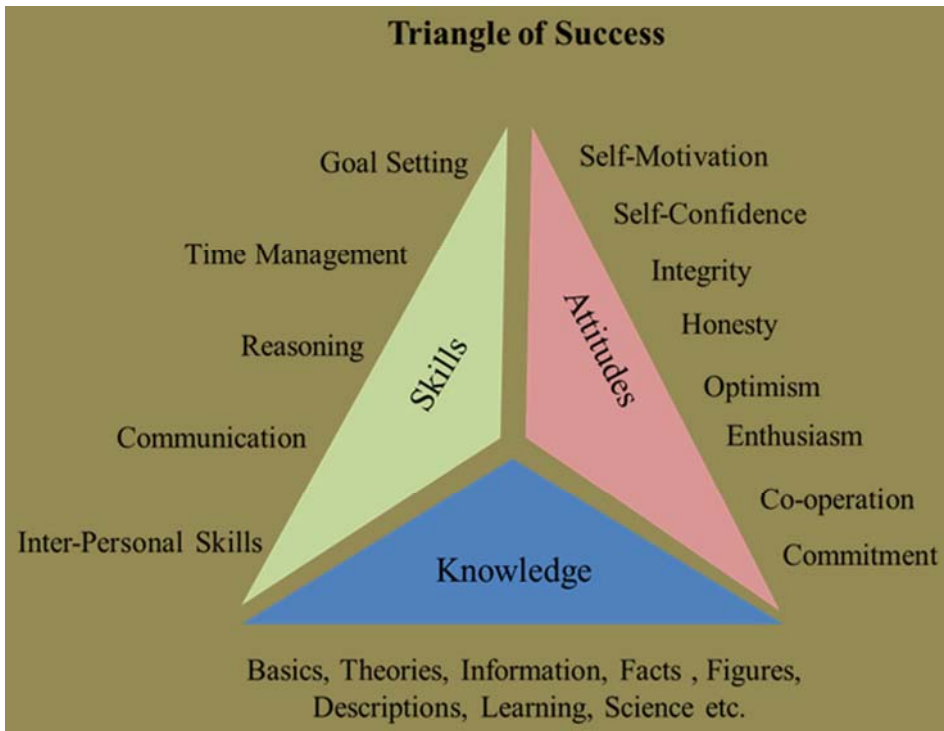
- developing communicative skills;
- using a variety of materials of the global network;
- enhancing reading and writing skills;
- replenishing the vocabulary of learners;
- increasing pupils' motivation to learn English.

In addition to this, studying with the use of Information technologies expands the horizons of schoolchildren, develops and maintains active relations and contacts with their peers in English-speaking countries.

Learners may take online tests, quizzes, participate in virtual competitions and contests, chat with peers from other countries, participate in webinars, in video conferences, etc. Ultimately, education stops to be identified with the formal schooling and even with high school training. All the activities are now treated as an inquiring education process if it is intended to change attitudes and behaviors of the individual. The function of education is performed by a variety of social institutions but not just as schools or universities do. Non-formal education which has to compensate for the shortcomings and contradictions of the traditional school system often meets urgent educational needs, and gives solutions even better than formal education. As noted in the report of UNESCO "Learning to be", education must not be limited within the walls of the school any more (Faure 1972:7).

The essence of this transition is not only a change in priorities but also a result of constant trainings of specialists to satisfy needs of an individual. The new concept provides individualized character of education which takes into account the capabilities, development and self-realization of each individual. This will be a feasible result for the development of various educational

programs. The important factor here is the development of education by which students' abilities to learn, skills of independent cognitive activity and the usage of advanced means of information technologies take place. The graph below indicates all the steps learners should take to reach success.



There were times when a good handwriting was a guarantee for the quiet and comfortable life up to the old age. Contrastingly, the last decade is characterized by the acceleration of renovation of technology and knowledge in various spheres of human activity. School, even University formal education is not enough to prepare real-life professionals. President of Motors Crop puts it this way. "We need experts with not four and even six, but with forty years of education". The desire of development lifelong learning is to implement it in practice which exacerbated the problem of adult education in society. There has been a radical change in the views on adult education and its role in the modern world.

The important feature of the development in education is its global nature. This feature reflects the availability of the integration processes in the modern world in order to promote interactions between countries in different spheres of public life. In highly developed countries education is being transformed from the category of national priorities into the category of the universal priorities. These trends define the main directions in the development of a new educational system. The principal difference between the new system and the traditional one lies in its technological base. Technological elements are marginal in the traditional education, which relies mainly on the training such as face to face interaction and printed materials. The technological basis of information technologies allows us to realize one of the main advantages of new educational system which is called training in the distance or distant learning.

Hence, here are some *practical strategies* which can help the learners to facilitate learning process:

✓ **Developing memory**

For an excellent memory it is very important to have such qualities as attentiveness and observation. Of course, the process of memorizing should be capturing as well. You should clearly recognize what is useful to you in this or that information.

Before you start memorizing, you need to force yourself to concentrate utterly. Next, you should include logical memory, and try to understand the meaning of memorizing, and not just to cram mechanically. Particular attention should be paid to the structure of the material. It is necessary to understand what the sequence of its composition is called for. Do not overload the memory of information in a short period of time. The amount of RAM (*Random Access Memory*) is equal to seven units. That is the perception we keep in memory comprises 7 objects in average – 7 words, 7 phrases, 7 sections (Maslow 2002:23-45).

It is helpful to use an associative memory method. For instance, the famous orator Cicero while preparing his speech moved from one room to another, linking each section of the speech with a certain area of home, and later during the speech in the Senate, he mentally repeated this way.

• **Record more**

It allows you to make some notes, and as they are written and interpreted by you, it will help you to learn the material better.

• **Mix and match**

One way to remember a new fact is to mentally associate it with what you already know. Thus, thinking about the second, you can always return to the first.

- **Separation**

Another way to better memorize the information is to divide it into parts. The shorter the facts, the better they are stored (Strawson 1964:78-80).

So, good memory is a key to success. Over its improvement one needs to work hard. And, perhaps, the first thing to start with – is to overcome laziness.

- ✓ **Driving laziness away**

The problem lies in the fact that often everything is done through the expression '*I must*', rather than through the motivating expression '*I want*'. That is the problem which hinders the whole teaching process – the lack of desire (motivation) to do something. There is a parable – how to eat an elephant? Step by step? If we divide a big deal of a task into steps it will become much easier. Break into small 'subtasks'. Set a purpose to fulfill only one of them in a certain time, and then the second one. So you slowly move towards the ultimate goal. Moreover, each subsequent task will seem easier.

If you do not want to do any of the upcoming cases, start to deal with them in parallel. First, do one of them for 10-15 minutes, then pass to another one. But if suddenly you will feel that you come to inspiration during some of them, do not be distracted off the case – until the Muse does not leave you.

This is what psychologist Ludmila Martynenko advises: "First of all, you need to give yourself a fighting mood and get ready to work: listen to the upbeat and cheerful music, arrange the workplace so that it evokes positive emotions" (Karvasarskiy 2006:45-47).

- ✓ **Getting pleasure from study**

Studying seems unbearable only in those cases when it is uninteresting or unclear. If you are interested in and immediately try to find out the incomprehensibility, the study starts to be enjoyable, and you become able to absorb any new data (Wang, Luo 2002:34).

Conclusion

Therefore, it is essential to learn to study effectively. The learners' professional future depends on their ability to learn and apply all they learned in practice. The role of the teacher is vital in this process. His/her task is to boost the cognitive activity of the learner in the entire learning process. Modern

pedagogical techniques such as cooperative learning, project methodology, the use of modern information technologies and the Internet resources help to implement a student-centered approach to learning, providing personalization and differentiation of learning based on children's abilities and their level of teaching.

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Սովորողների պատկերացումների վերափոխումը կրթության մասին

Ներկայումս, երբ քաղաքակրթությունների շփումը տարեցտարի ավելի է սերտանում, հույժ կարևոր է դառնում միջազգային կյանքին ինտեգրվելը, համաշխարհային մշակույթին, պատմությանն ու անցուդարձին իրազեկ քաղաքացի լինելը: Կրթության ոլորտում աշխատողների համար նույնպես օրախնդիր հարց է կրթական համակարգում այնպիսի շրջադարձային փոփոխություններ կատարել, որոնք կնպաստեն սովորողների միջմշակութային փոխըմբռնմանը, հանդուրժողականությանը, հասարակական ներգրավվածության բարձրացմանը, ցկյանս կրթության կազմակերպմանը և ազատ տեղաշարժին: Որպեսզի հայ սովորողները մրցունակ լինեն տեղական և արտասահմանյան աշխատաշուկայում, ՀՀ-ում վաղուց արդեն սկսվել են վերանայվել կրթության նպատակները, դասավանդման մեթոդների, ծրագրերի թարմացման, դասագրքաստեղծման, և շատ այլ հարցեր, որոնք կոչված են համակարգի համակողմանի ինտեգրմանը:

Հոդվածում վերը նշված հիմնահարցերի լուծման վերաբերյալ որոշ առաջարկություններ են արվում, որոնք էլ կարող են փոխել սովորողների պատկերացումները կրթության մասին: