The Role of the Facilitator and Learner in Student Achievement

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Abstract

Teachers spend a lot of time thinking about and looking at how they can contribute to the success of their students. There are many different factors and most teachers use a combination of strategies. This paper looks at five different research articles on different factors that contribute to student achievement and examines the role of the learner and facilitator in each.

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There are many factors that contribute to overall student achievement. Many of those factors happen outside of the classroom, but what the teacher does, has a great impact on the quality and type of learning that happens in the classroom. Traditionally, classroom teachers delivered instruction from the front of the room while students took notes. In order to be competitive in today’s world, today’s learners need to be proactive in their own learning (Newby et.al., 2006).

For this paper, several research articles that had student achievement as one of its variables were reviewed. Each article focused on different factors that contribute to student achievement, including the role of the learner and facilitator.

The first article, by Bartosh et. al., looked at how quality environmental education affected the scores on standardized state tests and on environmental education assessments. The study compared schools that used environmental education for at least three years, had a curriculum integrated around environmental education, had team teaching, allowed students to construct their own learning, and had the participation of the community with schools that had a traditional curriculum, which did not have students constructing their own meaning and using real-world applications. The study showed that there was a correlation between high standardized test scores and participation in a quality environmental education program. The study corroborated that students who have more control over their own learning and who also have real-world problems to solve in their classes, take ownership of their learning and are intrinsically motivated.

The article by Murray-Harvey focused on how relationships affect student learning. In this study, relationships not only mean the interpersonal relationships between teachers and students but also the time teachers take to really get to know the interests of their students and their backgrounds and use them in their teaching. The study looked at several variables including supportive and stressful relationships with family, teachers, and peers, psychological health and academic performance. The study showed that there was a strong correlation between teachers’ supportive relationships with students for academic performance.

The third article, by Lee and Rha, focused on student achievement for students taking online courses. Two aspects of online learning that the study looked at were how the online courses were structured and the interpersonal interaction of the students during an online course. The study found that students who had very little structure but a high amount of interaction did better in critical thinking than students who had a high amount of structure but little interpersonal interaction.

The fourth article, by Kousar et. al., looked at how direct instruction effects achievement and attitudes toward English grammar. It compared direct instruction with traditional teaching, where the lecture style is emphasized with students taking notes. The students who were taught with direct instruction did better in achievement and attitudes toward grammar. The students that were taught with direct instruction also showed better retention of the information as opposed to students who were taking notes. Direct instruction relates current lessons to other lessons to try to make it more meaningful. The study also concluded that direct instruction may have worked better because the study focused on grammar instruction and grammar is naturally structured.

The last article, by Cauley and McMillan, focused on how formative assessments affect student achievement. Formative assessments allow teachers to modify instruction based on feedback from students (Cauley and McMillan, 2010). This study concludes that formative assessments in the form of student feedback and modified instruction support student motivation and achievement.

In all of these studies, the role of the facilitator was extremely important in student achievement. The facilitator fostered positive relationships, provided real-world problems for students to solve, fostered a sense of intrinsic motivation based on frequent feedback and questions to check student understanding, and tapped into students’ background knowledge and interests to develop lessons.

The students’ role was also different from the traditional role of receiving information passively. Students had more control and ownership of their own learning in some of the studies. In the study that focused on online learning, students had a high amount of interpersonal interaction with others. In the environmental education study, students had opportunities to work together on projects to solve problems. Students also had an opportunity to monitor their own learning and comprehension in the study on formative assessments. Taken together, these studies support the idea that the role of the teacher is as a facilitator and that learning should be student centered.

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