THE 21ST CENTURY LEARNING APPROACHES: SELF-PACED LEARNING AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING

by:
Edelyn S. Mendoza
Teacher III, Talimundoc Elementary School

With the interest on the ways of improving the quality of education, many educators argue on what strategies and techniques would best help the learners learn the knowledge, skills and domains of learning contents.

Some would agree that self-paced learning has positive effect on the learning outcomes of the learners. On a study conducted by Tullis, G. and Benjamin A. (2011), on the effectiveness of self-paced learning, self-paced learners who controlled their own study was compared to learners who spent the same amount of overall study time. Results revealed that giving learners more control over their study behavior resulted in better memory performance, even without increasing total study time. Evidence presented here supports a growing trend to trust the metacognitive capabilities of learners and accordingly allow more self-regulation during learning (Finley et al., 2009; Kornell & Bjork, 2007; Kornell & Metcalfe, 2006).

Self-paced learning needs to have differentiated activities and instructions for diverse type of learners on their varied pace of learning.

There are variety of benefits of self-paced learning:

1. Learners are able to go at their own pace
2. There is no scheduling involved
3. Ideal for permanent content
Is self-paced learning applicable to all types of learners? How about the type of learners who would like to go with their groupmates doing the same activity with the same goal?

Gillies, R.M. (2016) states that cooperative learning is widely recognized as a pedagogical practice that promotes socialization and learning among students from preschool through to tertiary level and across different subject domains. It involves students working together to achieve common goals or complete group tasks – goals and tasks that they would be unable to complete by themselves.

Addition to this, engaging students in groups and expecting them to work together will not necessarily promote cooperation. Group members often struggle with what to do and discord can occur as member’s grapple with the demands of the task as well as managing the processes involved in learning such as dealing with conflicting opinions among members or with students who essentially loaf and contribute little to the group’s goal (Johnson & Johnson, 1990).

When it comes to self-paced learning, studies have shown that self-pacers may not have the motivation to monitor and control their learning or may not have the requisite knowledge to do so effectively (Tullis and Benjamin, 2011).

So, which is more effective, the self-paced learning or the cooperative learning? In order for us to answer that question, first, it is essential to know and understand the type of learners that you are handling. Multiple intelligences and psychology have something to do with this- to differentiate an introvert pupil vs. the extrovert pupil, an interpersonal vs the intrapersonal.

That is why teacher plays a vital role in establishing on which approach would better help the learners develop their thinking skills and learnings. Both self-paced learning and cooperative learning have advantages and disadvantages; that learning is bounded by these limitations.
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