Chapter 21
Supporting Student–Driven Learning: Enhancing Their Reflection, Collaboration, and Creativity

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ABSTRACT

Within an information driven society, knowledge is no more limited to a given source, context or pace of time. Indeed, the 21st century demands have called for more skills and competences which go beyond drills and memorizing. Learning is, indeed, not merely a process of accumulating and processing information, but it has to do more with constructing and negotiating meaning, problem solving, reflection and creativity. This chapter intends to clarify these skills, focusing more on students’ reflection, collaboration, and creativity in learning. In addition to defining these skills and discussing their importance to students’ learning, one’s concern is to help teachers enhance them. This is through clarifying the teacher’s role and putting forward a set of teaching techniques that can help develop students’ reflection, collaboration and creativity. Besides, since “assessment frames learning, creates learning activity and orients all aspects of learning behaviors,” this chapter also suggests assessment activities targeting that objective (Gibbs, 2006, p. 23).

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid developments and changes with digital technologies, teachers are challenged to develop their thinking and practice to instill critical minds able to participate actively in the knowledge society. Indeed, students need to develop the necessary 21st century skills that enable them to thrive for today’s economy. According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS) (2007), the 21st century learning skills refers to the ability to:

1. Collect and/or retrieve information,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1689-7.ch021
2. Organize and manage information,
3. Evaluate the quality, relevance, and usefulness of information, and
4. Generate accurate information through the use of existing resources.

For Wagner (2008), students need seven survival skills to be prepared for 21st century life, work, and citizenship:

1. Critical thinking and problem solving.
2. Collaboration and leadership.
3. Agility and adaptability.
4. Initiative and entrepreneurialism.
5. Effective oral and written communication.
6. Accessing and analyzing information.
7. Curiosity and imagination.

To specify more these skills, Hanover Research (2011) examines the framework of six different 21st century skills lists and highlights the most and least popular skill types. The report reveals that the first ranked skills include: Collaboration and teamwork, creativity, imagination, critical thinking and problem solving. Yet, the question that needs to be addressed here is: How can teachers foster these skills to prepare students for the challenges of 21st century citizenship?

To integrate and foster these skills in the classroom, teachers need to move beyond the traditional assumptions of learning as an individual process towards dynamic learning mindsets that is social, collaborative and self-directed. This requires a shift from ‘Instruction Paradigm’ where students are receivers of information to a ‘Learning Paradigm’ where they involve actively in discovering and constructing knowledge. Thus, students need to be active agents who play a central role in directing and deciding their own learning pathway. Whereas, teachers act as facilitators who motivate them to take the initiative through involving them in multiple opportunities to hold control over their learning.

Teachers, therefore, need to enhance students’ driven or centered learning strategies that enable them to learn how to learn more effectively. Besides, the classroom needs to be a space for exploring students’ capacities and building the new required skills through allowing for more interaction and collaboration between teachers and students and among students themselves, besides encouraging them to think and be creative in learning. Moreover, to help achieve this goal, this chapter puts forward a set of suggestions and techniques which target fostering students’ reflection, collaboration and creativity both through teaching and assessment practices.

**REFLECTION**

Reflection is an important capacity for students to develop since it can contribute to their learning and autonomy. It has been defined by Boud et al., (1985) as “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations” (p.19). This exploration involves “reviewing an experience of practice in order to describe, analyze, evaluate and so inform learning about practice” (Reid, 1993 p.305). This implies that reflection is a process of learning from experience through questioning and evaluating one’s practices.
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