

From The Transmission to the Personal Construction of Knowledge through Group Discussion, Collaborative Inquiry and Investigation in Higher Education

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Abstract

In the classroom, teachers are normally regarded as transmitters of knowledge which learners have to receive, memorise and be able to reproduce on an exam. However, the conception of learner autonomy as a prominent educational goal underlines the pressing need for a paradigm shift from transmissive pedagogies to constructivist, autonomy-oriented pedagogies in which learners assume responsibility for their learning, play a more active role in their learning process, and construct their own knowledge independently. To carry out this paradigm shift, an innovative pedagogical intervention has been conceived for a subject taught in the Degree in English Studies at the University of Granada (Spain). This subject is called Acquisition of English as a Second Language and focuses on helping learners to gain knowledge on the influence of different cognitive and individual factors on how English is acquired as a second language. The major aim of the present paper is to discuss how group discussion, collaborative inquiry and active investigation based on specific ‘linguistic cases’ can promote a constructivist, autonomy-oriented approach in learners’ learning process and how they can help prepare learners to meet the complex educational, social and working demands of our present-day society.

Keywords: collaborative inquiry; constructivism; higher education; innovative pedagogy; learner autonomy