W01-1: Biography and Teaching

Let’s start to think about your own experience from teaching and learning no matter if you have no, little or diverse experience in teaching in academic contexts. The basic message of this worksheet can be summarized as follows: “Teachers teach as they were taught, not as they were taught to teach.” (Altman 1983), meaning that it is beneficial to reflect the influence of our individual biographical learning experiences on our (future) teaching. Reflect the following on your own and take notes:

1) Think about a learning experience as a student. What positive and possibly negative situations do you recall? And why were these experiences positive or negative for you? Take a sheet of paper and make a quick sketch of one of your positive/negative learning experiences. Where do you position your teacher? What does the teacher do/say? What do you/the learners do or say and how do they feel? What materials are you/they working with? … Get creative – there is no right or wrong!

2) Briefly describe your sketch in detail from a learner’s perspective: how would you describe the teaching activities or teaching quality in this situation? And what characteristics and skills does a good (university) teacher need from a learner’s perspective?

3) Switching to the teacher’s perspective: What are your professional long-term goals a) as an academic and b) as a (future) university teacher?

😎 *Find yourself a learning partner.*

4) Discuss the similarities and differences of how you characterize “good teaching”. Differentiate between personal and professional aspects. Put down at least three qualities of “good teaching” you two can agree on in this GoogleDocs.

After thinking about your personal ideas on the topic of good teaching, these videos will present further information on theoretical models and empirical evidence.

5) Watch the Google Slide Screencast and the Video. Take notes on further theoretical and empirical indicators for “good teaching”.

6) Discuss in class/ with your partner how the points made in the videos differ from or are similar to your own characteristics for “good teaching” and “good learning experience”. Add some of the new important points in the GoogleDocs.

After processing all this information about good teaching and different perspectives, you probably wonder what this means to you. Practical implications are difficult because of the abstraction level. Therefore, we start to transfer this information into practice with a couple of statements.

7) Take sides! Do you agree, disagree or are somewhat in between? Give reason for your decision.

Statement 1: *“Students are responsible for their learning. Competencies and an adequate attitude towards learning can be expected at the university level!”*

Statement 2: *“The students‘ preferences: Among students, active participation is unpopular (defensive learning culture). Therefore, students will not be activated anyway!”*

Statement 3: *“Inefficacy: Supporting the learning process comes at the expense of contents. The time needed for activating methods means less time for the contents!”*

And finally - your take home thoughts:

8) Taking your experiences, your personal (teaching) goals, the presented theory and empirical research as well as the discussions into consideration: What is the role and responsibility of a teacher in your opinion? Write down your thoughts.

9) What would you need to change/adapt in your initial sketch from (1) in order to meet the described role and responsibility of a teacher?

Literature

Altman, H. (1983): Training foreign language teachers for learner-centered instruction: deep structures, surface structures, and transformations. In: Alatis, J.A., Stern, H.H., Strevens, P. (Eds): GURT ’83: Applied linguistics and the preparation of second language teachers: Towards a rationale. Washington, D.C., p. 24)

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