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Self-directed learning: ownership and responsibility

Education in Colombia has evolved over the years and it is due to new educational proposals that are being implemented as learning alternatives. In addition, according to teaching and learning processes, it is very significant to take into consideration the varied approaches that are involved in both fields, and it is on the teacher the best choice for it. Regarding this information, there are some relevant approaches that are present in our study context, but we are going to focus much more on the humanistic one. The two major theorists of this approach are: Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), and Carl Rogers (1902-1987). They center on the learner as an individual and consider that learning is not just about the intellect, but also about educating the “whole person,” taking a person’s interests, goals, and enthusiasm into account, so that full potential can be achieved. (SHARP, 2012).

True learning requires a big deal of commitment and responsibility on the part of the learners, who must take an active role in their learning process, set their own goals and learning strategies to make their second language learning experience more meaningful (Pemberton & Cooker, 2012)

In relation to what has been mentioned above, we carried out our research in a private institution in which the principal learning feature is to encourage students to develop their own way to gain skills or awareness through a study process, that is intrinsically proposed by the institution and it is called self-directed learning. Thanks to this is why we chose this research work

Facing self-directed learning challenges

Being a teacher is to be exposed to different teaching and learning environments, to students' background and needs, to the institution's philosophy, to social issues, to the existence or not of resources; among others. Despite of these situations, we see this as a great opportunity to prove what we are made of, to realize if this is our real vocation or if we are going to find it out on the road. This is why we call it a challenge, but it is a good one because we are under a new methodology that we were not used to before, and it is called B-learning.

Another significant protagonist which is involved in the methodology and in our research itself, is learner autonomy, and according to the following authors it is described like this:

(Holec, 1981) defined learner autonomy as “the ability to take charge of ones own learning.” At the same time, (King, 2011) admits the importance learner autonomy has in terms language learning. For these reasons, autonomous learning has the potential to greatly increase student learning through self-empowerment which is defined as a self-directed learning.

The B-learning methodology and self-directed learning are closely connected in our context, and also with the implementation of one of the most important tool in our teaching-learning environment which

is the textbook. This is the physical guide that takes students step by step to access a varied grammar, language features, vocabulary and day-to-day situations, in order to help them out construct their own learning process. For that reason, it is crucial to analyze its implementation regarding self-directed learning in a B-learning environment in a private institution in Rionegro, Antioquia.

As shown above, the institution expects students to achieve this autonomous learning by encouraging the meaningful use of the textbook with the help of the teachers (They are known as teach pals in the institution)

Our standing point

Despite of all the possible teaching contexts that exist in our area, we chose this one because it is presented at the institution we work at, and we as a team decided to explore it much more by doing first an observation in order to see how students work on their own, how they behave while they work, how much effort they invest in their learning process, and how they interact with the use of English when they need some help. Our data collection was carried out through an interview and we wanted to ask students who were currently studying at the institution, and also the ones who had already graduated from their learning program. The idea was to collect some of their experiences, their fears, their expectations, and their own satisfaction by learning in this way and to know if it was for them a worth activity for their future lives.

Researchers will provide this exercise to identify the effects of the implementation of the textbook as a tool to foster self-directed learning, under a qualitative approach, which will allow the institution either to maintain its methodology or to implement new adaptations.

References

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