# Conceptualizing Personalized Learning: Review of Literature 2007-2017

**Authors :** Ruthanne Tobin

**Abstract :** As our data-driven, cloud-based, knowledge-centric lives become ever more global, mobile, and digital, educational systems everywhere are struggling to keep pace. Schools need to prepare students to become critical-thinking, tech-savvy, life-long learners who are engaged and adaptable enough to find their unique calling in a post-industrial world of work. Recognizing that no nation can afford poor achievement or high dropout rates without jeopardizing its social and economic future, the thirty-two nations of the OECD are launching initiatives to redesign schools, generally under the banner of Personalized Learning or 21st Century Learning. Their intention is to transform education by situating students as co-enquirers and co-contributors with their teachers of what, when, and how learning happens for each individual. In this focused review of the 2007-2017 literature on personalized learning, the author sought answers to two main questions: "What are the theoretical frameworks that guide personalized learning?" and "What is the conceptual understanding of the model?" Ultimately, the review reveals that, although the research area is overly theorized and under-substantiated, it does provide a significant body of knowledge about this potentially transformative educational restructuring. For example, it addresses the following questions: a) What components comprise a PL model? b) How are teachers facilitating agency (voice & choice) in their students? c) What kinds of systems, processes and procedures are being used to guide the innovation? d) How is learning organized, monitored and assessed? e) What role do inquiry based models play? f) How do teachers integrate the three types of knowledge: Content, pedagogical and technological? g) Which kinds of forces enable, and which impede, personalizing learning? h) What is the nature of the collaboration among teachers? i) How do teachers co-regulate differentiated tasks? One finding of the review shows that while technology can dramatically expand access to information, expectations of its impact on teaching and learning are often disappointing unless the technologies are paired with excellent pedagogies in order to address students' needs, interests and aspirations. This literature review fills a significant gap in this emerging field of research, as it serves to increase conceptual clarity that has hampered both the theorizing and the classroom implementation of a personalized learning model.
**Keywords :** curriculum change, educational innovation, personalized learning, school reform