

A Constructivist and Strategic Approach to School Learning: A Study in a Tunisian Primary School

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Abstract : Despite the development of new pedagogic methods, current teaching practices put more emphasis on the learning products than on the processes learners deploy. In school syllabi, for instance, very little time is devoted to both the explanation and analysis of strategies aimed at resolving problems by means of targeting students' metacognitive procedures. Within a cognitive framework, teaching/learning contexts are conceived of in terms of cognitive, metacognitive and affective activities intended for the treatment of information. During these activities, learners come to develop an array of knowledge and strategies which can be subsumed within an active and constructive process. Through the investigation of strategies and metacognition concepts, the purpose is to reflect upon the modalities at the heart of the learning process and to demonstrate, similarly, the inherent significance of a cognitive approach to learning. The scope of this paper is predicated on a study where the population is a group of 76 primary school pupils who experienced difficulty with learning French. The population was divided into two groups: the first group was submitted during three months to a strategy-based training to learn French. All through this phase, the teachers centred class activities round making learners aware of the strategies the latter deployed and geared them towards appraising the steps these learners had themselves taken by means of a variety of tools, most prominent among which is the logbook. The second group was submitted to the usual learning context with no recourse whatsoever to any strategy-oriented tasks. The results of both groups point out the improvement of linguistic competences in the French language in the case of those pupils who were trained by means of strategic procedures. Furthermore, this improvement was noted in relation with the native language (Arabic), a fact that tends to highlight the importance of the interdisciplinary investigation of (meta-)cognitive strategies. These results show that strategic learning promotes in pupils the development of a better awareness of their own processes, which contributes to improving their general linguistic competences.

Keywords : constructive approach, cognitive strategies, metacognition, learning

Conference Title : ICDPPS 2018 : International Conference on Developmental Psychology and Parenting Styles

Conference Location : Sydney, Australia

Conference Dates : January 29-30, 2018