101 Educational Concepts

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Preface

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António Guterres, the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations, once defined "education" as "the bedrock of informed, tolerant societies, and a primary driver of sustainable development which unlocks opportunities and narrows inequalities". Such a broad definition goes beyond the old obsession of "schooling" which entailed transmitting knowledge in manageable lumps to be stored and then used for passing tests and having qualifications. Nowadays, it is believed that the process of education flows from four basic orientations of "knowledge" (what we know), "skills" (how we use the knowledge), "character" (how we behave), and "metacognition" (how we reflect and adapt).

Such a radical shift in orientation from schooling to education has led to an avalanche of new terminologies and concepts in the field. Since education is a discipline where philosophy, psychology, sociology, literature etc. come across, new concepts and theories are continuously formulated and proposed. Therefore, policy-makers, textbook writers, educators, teachers, and even students are in urgent need of developing their technical knowledge for having a better performance.

In line with this conceptualizing, the current work in the source language by Dr. Reza Pishghadam, the prominent figure in the field, was an attempt to familiarize the target group with the latest concepts in the field of education. He, in an interdisciplinary effort, has coined new terms such as "cultuling" "applective education", "emotioncy", "coopetition" etc. to shed more light on the hidden dimensions of this field. Needless to say, coining new terms, developing new paradigms, proposing new dichotomies, and providing new classifications are the initial steps which should be taken to illuminate the complex process of learning.

Since language teachers, prospective language teachers, and language learners are among the target groups of the original work, the current translator decided to translate the book from Persian into English to provide a further opportunity for the target group to develop their professional knowledge in the field.

It is hoped that the current work can equip teachers with better knowledge, skills, and attitudes to play their vital role which is preparing the students for a better life in the future.

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September, 2020

Life's Ratchet and Learning

Every individual has a talent screw bestowed on him/her by God. The screw is supposed to be fixed in a part of the individual's life. Considerable effort is required to push and turn the screw. The more effort is made, the more the screw pushes down. But if there is no effort, the screw begins to rust, and if improper pressure is applied, the screw is stripped. The screw rotates in a certain direction and the threads push down gradually. To turn the life screws correctly, the individual should know when, where, and how to screw. In educational settings, student's learning screw is in teachers' hands but it seems that this screw has remained untouched or got stripped. This screw requires proper lubrication and pressure to be tightened up. Both educational form and content need to be changed for the screw to move again. It is not possible to rotate the students' intellectual and cognitive screws with old structure and content, and expect growth, development, and progress.

Assessment in the Conceptual Model of Education (CME)

According to The Conceptual Model of Education (CME) at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, education means transferring and acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge (soft and hard skills) and values to create a better society. Nevertheless, teachers usually measure theoretical and practical knowledge and hard skills, while they largely ignore soft skills and values.

Soft skills refer to critical, creative, systems, futures thinking, interpersonal and intrapersonal management, sensory and environmental management. Values also address issues related to the domains such as self, family, society, the environment, human nature, and super nature. Teachers are expected to consider soft skills and values while they keep an eye on measuring knowledge and hard skills. In educational settings, measuring soft skills and values is the missing element which has received scant attention in recent years.

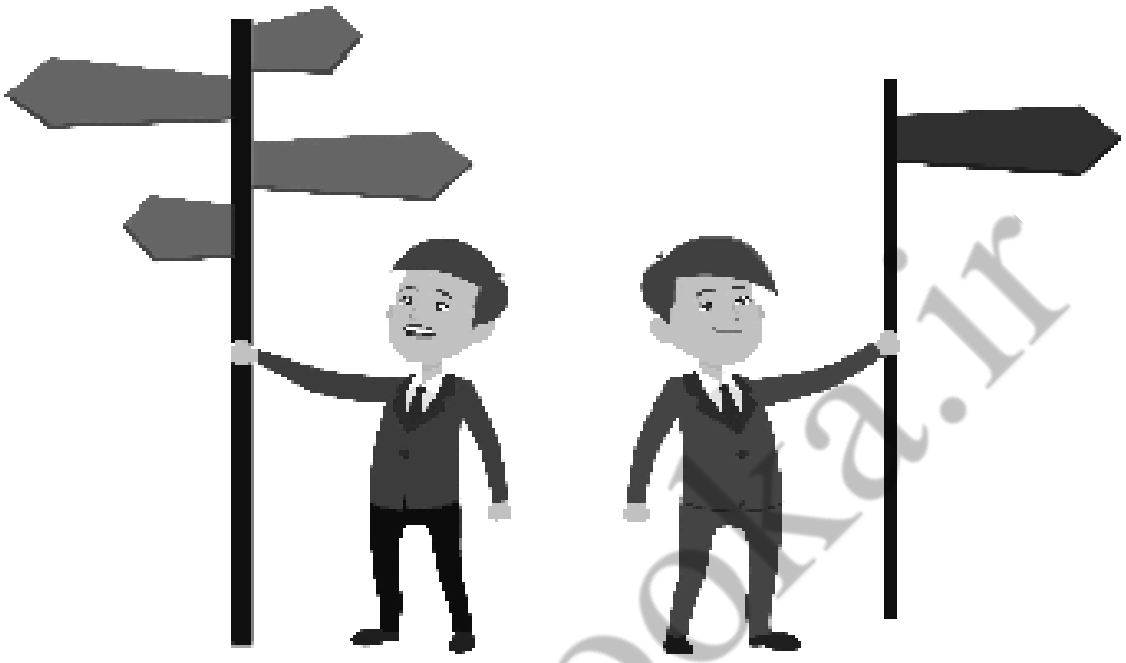
Hard Skills and Soft Skills in Education

"**Hard skills**" refer to a level of experience and expertise that, along with student's core knowledge, helps him/her learn the instructional materials. The ability to use a variety of educational applications and mastery of foreign languages are among such skills.

"**Soft skills**" are personality traits that play a crucial role in student's interactional patterns, academic performance, and career prospects. Being equipped with different types of thinking, managing the senses, getting along well with others, and establishing personal and interpersonal relationships are among such skills.

The use of these skills in teaching helps teachers direct their instructional activities. Moreover, by improving these skills, they can go beyond instructional contents and empower students to play a more significant role in society.

Convergent and Divergent Thinking in Education

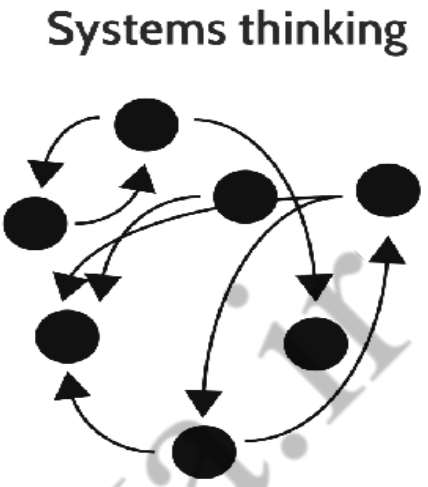


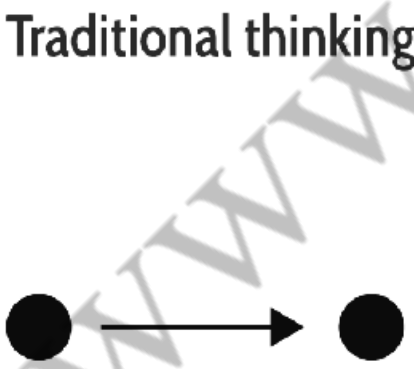
Has it ever occurred to you, when facing a problem or challenge, a solution comes to your mind and your mind exclusively focuses on that specific solution and you cannot think of other solutions? This exclusive focus on a single solution is called "convergent thinking". In contrast, in "divergent thinking" mind seeks multiple perspectives and multiple possible answers to questions or problems and the person acts more creatively.

The questions that focus on what, when, and where pave the way for "convergent thinking," while the questions that address how and why lead to divergent thinking. Teachers should teach in a way that "divergent thinking" rather than convergent thinking is reinforced in students. In this way, the students will be able to propose creative, innovative, and diverse solutions to the teacher's questions and strengthen their mental abilities.

Systems Thinking in Education

"Systems thinking" in education refers to students' cognitive ability to discern discrete learning materials as a whole through connecting all interacting elements. Teachers should take systems thinking into account and teach students in a way that they can understand the interrelations among various elements and consequently adopt a holistic view on different phenomena.





This type of education helps students to think about other aspects of their life in addition to mastering learning materials. Therefore, systems thinking makes a significant difference in students' thinking processes, their mental attitudes, and their personal life. It can also make students view issues from a cyclical non-linear fashion rather than a linear one.

Applied Language Education

Unlike "conventional language teaching" that refers to the use of other sciences in language learning, "applied language education" deals with the effect of language learning on other sciences. In this education, it is believed that language learning classrooms have the capacity to improve students' life skills. Learning these skills helps them meet the daily life challenges effectively and feel more responsible for their behaviors and actions.

Moreover, applied language education can pave the way for developing forceful personality in students and reducing their negative emotions such as anxiety. Since improving life skills is highly important, educationalists should pay considerable attention to the life syllabus, educating reflective teachers, and designing life-oriented exams.

Research-Based Education

"Research-based Education" (I-as-researcher and other-as-researcher) can be divided into 5 grades as follows:

Fifth degree education: This education is based on outdated and non-applied learning materials in the absence of any innovation and creativity. The only tools a teacher uses are textbooks and pamphlets which have been used for a long time. Therefore, no research finding is used in his/her education.

Fourth degree education: Here the teacher uses updated and applied materials, but his/her information is still based on other authors' books and researchers' studies, and does not make use of his/her own research works.

Third degree education: In this type of education, research is carried out in an imitative way, and if the teacher conducts a research project, it is just for meeting the professional obligations. In this education, the teacher may apply the research findings, but they are mostly of theoretical and review types.

Second degree education: Research in this type of education focuses on outcome in which the teacher as researcher does the research purposefully based on a road map to solve a problem. The research findings help the teacher to teach with a broader vision.

First degree education: In this education, the teacher is a theorizer and teaches his/her original research findings to the students as instructional. Therefore, this education is based on teacher's self-initiated research.

Reverse Education

Have you ever wondered what would happen if "assignment" and "teaching" replaced each other, That is, students listen to teacher at home and do homework in class?

"Reverse education" is one of the most innovative methods of education in which the classroom activities and home activities are reversed and a combination of traditional and electronic education is applied. In this education, the students are provided with the instructional materials electronically before the class begins and they are required to study them. Therefore, when they attend the class, the class time is spent on discussion, practice, and projects.

Through this educational model, teachers can change their role from a lecturer to a designer, director, or facilitator who helps students to take advantage of the classroom by doing individual or group activities.

Needless to say, in reverse education, the classroom becomes a workshop in which all students are engaged in a variety of activities such as solving problems, doing projects, and interacting with other students. Therefore, being learner-centered, focusing on teamwork, and paying attention to higher-order thinking processes such as criticizing, analyzing, and evaluating are among the characteristic features of this education.

Embodied Education

"Embodied education" refers to the role of awareness in the proper use of body (body-related) in learning. This means that a person's body affects his/her cognition and plays an important role in controlling emotions.

Paying attention to the proper condition of the student's body produces a positive feeling which paves the way for communicating with the teacher and the materials.

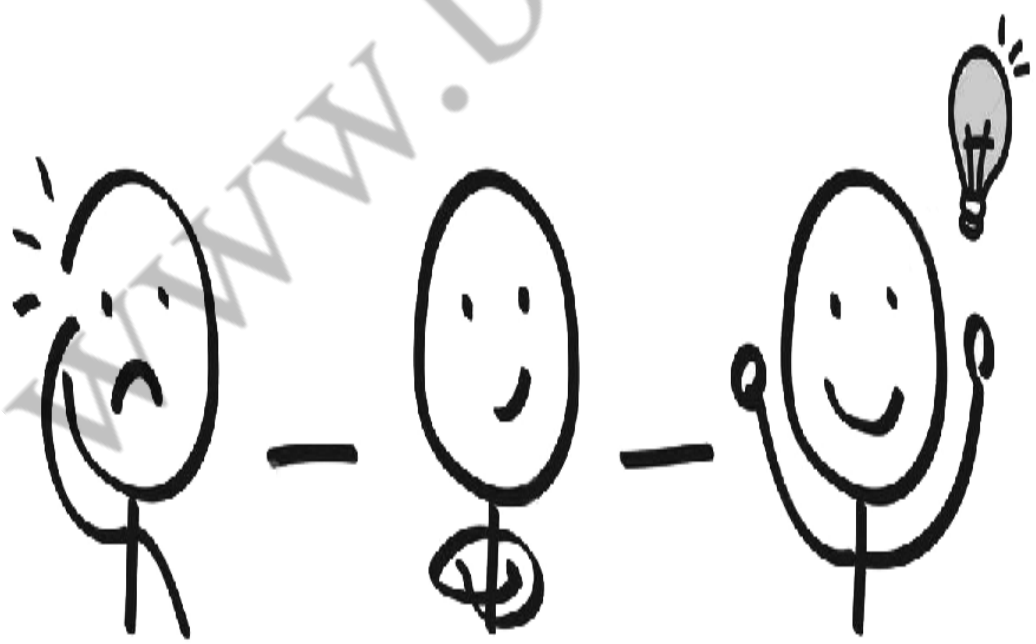
Providing students with mobility in the classroom, having comfortable chairs, and allowing them to eat and drink in the classroom are among those alternatives that give them a pleasant physical experience.

Applective Education (Application + Reflection)

If we want to make students creative, critical, and academic, we should teach them how to think, and this would not be possible without teaching them how to organize their thoughts.

"Applective education" consists of two words: "application" and "reflection". In this type of education, "application" and "reflection" are of the same level of importance, and teachers must teach in a way that makes students think and enables them to bring their thoughts to the level of application.

In such circumstances, we can expect generating ideas since classroom activities give students the opportunity to make meaningful connections among form, meaning, and application for generating creative sentences.



Thick and Thin Education

Since the senses play an important role in learning, their proper use accelerates the learning process. From this point of view, education is of two types: thick education and thin education.

In thick education, teacher tries to apply the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch in the learning process. But in thin education, just the senses of sight and hearing are often used and the other senses play a negligible role in learning. Therefore, teacher's lecture is the dominant teaching technique of the class. In general, while learning in thick education is usually more objective and exciting, in thin education, it tends to be more abstract and tedious. In thick education, less information is transferred in a longer period of time while in thin education relatively more information is transferred in a shorter period of time. Therefore, the students' age, their ability, and the course objective determine the type of education.

Creative Teaching vs. Teaching for Creativity

It should be noted that "creative teaching" and "teaching for creativity" are different. In creative teaching, the focus is on teacher and the way of teaching and it includes the use of creative approaches in teaching.

Teaching for creativity is learner-centered and is done to increase creative abilities in students.

It should be noted that although these two concepts have different concentrations, they are interrelated. Creative teaching can inspire teaching to increase creativity, and traits such as risk-taking, intrinsic motivation, and curiosity which need to be stimulated to increase students' creativity.