RECENTERING THE TEACHER:
From transmitter of knowledge to mediator of learning
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South Africa

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Introduction: National Curriculum Statement

- Traditional role of teacher: teacher-oriented and content-based approach

- Outcomes-based approach (ideals):
  - Learners responsible for own learning
  - Independent
  - Creative and critical thinkers
  - Solve problems
### Legal framework

| ✓ | Constitution Act 108 of 1996 |
|   | South African Schools Act    |
| ✓ | National Education Policy Act|
| ✓ | Code of Professional Ethics  |
Legal framework...

✓ Constitution Act 108 of 1996

😊 Section 29(1):

grants the right to a basic education

😊 Section 28(2):

enhances learners’ right to education
Legal framework...

- South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

- Preamble:
  
  Provide education of progressively high quality...
  
  ... develop talents & capabilities of all South Africans
Legal framework…

✔ National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996

😊 Preamble:

…legislation to facilitate democratic transformation of national system
…to serve needs and interests of all people
…to uphold fundamental rights
Legal framework…

- Code of Professional Ethics

😊 General stipulations ré teachers:
  ... acknowledge calling to teach/train
  ... attitude and dedication of teachers
  ... acknowledge / uphold basic rights
Mediation in the classroom

The task of a mediator

- Greek word: mesites = intervene between two parties

What is the difference between a teacher and a mediator?
Traditional teacher
The mediator
Mediation in the classroom

Principles of Mediation

• Intentional intervention
• Directing the learning process
• Do not tell learners what to think or produce solutions to problems
• Be sensitive to diverse learner needs
• Help learners to bridge the gap between what they cannot do on their own at a given time to what they can do with a little help
• Create awareness that there is more than one solution to a problem
Mediation in the classroom

Principles of Mediation

• Principles of mediation embedded in the theory of Constructivism
• Two main trends: Cognitive Constructivism and Social Constructivism
• Cognitive Constructivism: equip learners with cognitive skills to construct their own sense of what is being learned
• Social Constructivism: acquire knowledge through interaction with the environment instead of only relying on the teacher
Mediation in the classroom

Principles of Mediation:

• Links with the theory of Reuven Feuerstein (1979) on cognitive modifiability
• Mediation between teacher and learner is instrumental in cognitive modifiability
• Selecting and organizing the world of stimuli for the learners instead of direct exposure to stimuli
• Equipping the learner with means to learn (tools to acquire knowledge and skills)
Mediation in the classroom

The quality of a mediated learning experience

- Feuerstein (1991) –
  1. Intentionality and reciprocity
  2. Transcendence
  3. Meaning
  4. Competence
  5. Self-regulation and self-control
  6. Sharing behaviour
  7. Individuation
  8. Goal-planning (goal-setting and goal-achieving)
  9. Novelty and challenge
  10. Self-change
- Intention to teach and change mental state
- Awake reciprocal desire to learn
- Create awareness of learning processes
- Self-reflection

INTENTIONALITY AND RECIPROCITY
• Go beyond goals of the interaction and apply to new situations
• Disclose to learners how and where learning can be used in other situations

TRANSCENDENCE
• Interpret the meaning of interaction: why? what for?
• Let learners understand the value and relevance of what is being done
• Also implies a search for meaning
• Create a feeling of mastery and success
• Optimistic disposition, belief that I am able to solve problems
• Let learners know if they successfully completed a task
• Feedback
• Help learners achieve competence and then mediate feelings of satisfaction
• This motivates learners to master new situations
• Guard against impulsiveness ("stop a minute let me think")
• Involve learners in self-reflective activities
• Provide opportunity for learners to learn from one another
• Promote cooperation between learners

SHARING BEHAVIOUR
Learners to remain individuals and develop own personalities
Allow different approaches/different solutions to problems
Acknowledge different learning styles
Learner to become owner of his/her own ideas

INDIVIDUATION
• Learners should set their own realistic goals and develop ways to achieve them
• Learners should learn skills to evaluate whether they achieved their objectives

GOAL PLANNING
• Provide tasks that are difficult enough to present a challenge, but not so difficult that they are demotivating

NOVELTY AND CHALLENGE
• Learners should assess themselves and become aware of their own progress
• Self-reflection

SELF-CHANGE
Competences required to be a mediator

- NOT a checklist to determine competency!
- Meant to inform exit level outcomes.
- Combine and weigh roles differently.
- Integrate theory and practice...
Competences required to be mediator...

Norms and Standards for Educators, section 4
[contained in National Education Policy Act]

Central 1st role of learning mediation,

however:

7th role of learning/subject/discipline/phase specialist = over-arching role
Competences required to be mediator

- Section 4(a)(iv) Advance and protect basic rights
- Section 4(b) Enable full potential
- Section 4(c) Achieve equitable education opportunities
- Section 4(e) Encourage lifelong learning
- Section 4(h) Recognize aptitudes and abilities
- Section 4(i) Encourage independent and critical thought
- Section 4(j) Promote a culture of respect for teaching and learning
Practical competences

- Use a second official language to explain, describe, discuss
- Employ appropriate strategies: learner needs and disabilities
- Use key teaching strategies, whole class teaching, self-study
- Adjust teaching strategies: developmental stage of learners
- Encourage critical and creative thinking
- Challenge stereotypes
Foundational competences

✓ Understand how language mediates learning
✓ Understand different learning styles and preferences
✓ Understand nature of barriers to learning
✓ Understand explanations of learning at different ages
✓ Understand potential causes of failure in learning processes
Reflexive competences

- Reflect on extent to which objectives have been achieved
- Defend choice of learning mediation
- Analyse learning that occurs in classroom
- Assess effects of existing discipline practices on learning
- Reflect on ways to overcome barriers to learning
- Analyse strengths and weaknesses: addressing issues
Aims of the study

• To determine to what extent practicing teachers studying for a Honours BEd degree reflect competence in the ability to act as mediators of learning;

• To evaluate the opportunities built into the training programme offered to the practicing teachers to develop knowledge and skills regarding a mediational approach to teaching and learning; and

• To explore ways of nurturing a mediational approach to teaching and learning in teacher training programmes
Empirical research

- Pilot study conducted with 40 practicing teachers who study for a Honours BEd-degree at the NWU Vaal Triangle Campus
- Literature survey: NCS documents, mediation, relevant policy documents and legislation
- Quantitative research method
- Descriptive in nature:
  - Survey research
- Self-constructed closed questionnaire
Empirical research

Self-constructed questionnaire

- Section A: Biographic data
- Section B: Determining understanding of the concept mediation in the classroom
- Section C: Determining understanding of the competences required to become a mediator of learning
- Section D: Aspects to consider when deciding on a teaching style
Empirical research: Biographic data

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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>7=17.5%</td>
<td>16=40%</td>
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<td>Ex Mod C 17=45.9%</td>
<td>Private 3=8.1%</td>
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<td>Senior 18=45%</td>
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## Empirical research

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<tr>
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<td>0.820</td>
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<td>Section C</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>0.224</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section D</td>
<td>0.675</td>
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Empirical research

Descriptive statistics

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B = Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly agree (4)

C = Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly agree (4)

D = Always (1), Often (2), Sometimes (3), Never (4)
Findings

Section B: The concept “mediation”

• All the questions expected students to **strongly agree** with the statements made – except (2) ”a mediator should tell learners what to think”

• Only for 11 of the statements “strongly agree” was indicated, but not by everybody

• The majority of the responses confirmed that the students **disagreed** to the statements made regarding the meaning of the concept mediation, there is need for concern that there are still teachers who are not knowledgeable on what is expected of a mediator of learning
Findings

Section C: Competences needed to be mediator of learning

- students are informed regarding the competences expected of mediators, four aspects indicated cause for concern:
  - 41.17% see *rote learning* as more important than *learning style preferences*
  - 50% are confused regarding catering for *gender differences* in classes
  - 35.48% (C15) + 34.38% (C 21) are unconvinced about analysing weaknesses when handling *human rights* in classrooms
  - Most of the questions expected students to *strongly agree* with the statements made – except statements 1, 2, 3, 4, 9 & 19: *strongly disagree*

- “*Strongly agree*” only indicated for statement 16 & 18 (51.61% & 45.16%)

- Although most responses indicated that
  - 48.39% regard *self study* as the ultimate answer to critical, creative thinking
Findings

Section D: Factors to consider when deciding on a teaching strategy

All the statements expected of the students to indicate *Always*

Yet only D1 (content knowledge) showed a clear majority response of 87.1% *Always*...

• A cause for concern lies in the fact that although participants seemed to be informed, there was a lack of completely convinced responses

• D2-D8 *Always* responses only ranged from 54.84% - 67.74%

• D4 responses linked up well with C20 responses: 48.39% (D4) and 50% (C20) were confused about catering for gender differences in class
Findings

Do practicing teachers reflect competence in the ability to act as mediator of learning?

1. It appears as if some of the practicing teachers understand the meaning of the concept “mediation”.

2. Disturbing that there are many who are not knowledgeable on the meaning of the concept “mediation”.

3. Aspects such as *not suggesting solutions to problems*, *developing cognitive structures* and *changing the learners cognitive structure* were not viewed by many as tasks of a mediator.
Findings

Do practicing teachers reflect competence in the ability to act as mediator of learning?

4. Concern about the quality of the learning experiences in the classroom

5. 55% indicated that a mediator should tell learners what to think: this is against the ideals of outcomes-based education.

6. A very important aspect of mediation is changing the cognitive structures of a learner: disconcerting that this was not strongly acknowledged by the practicing teachers.
Do practicing teachers reflect competence in the ability to act as mediator of learning?

7. Disturbing discovery: teachers’ misconstrued perceptions of the importance of *rote learning*....

8. Vital role of the *learning style preferences* of learners not convincingly acknowledged!!!

9. Principles of *language in teaching* (C10 & D6) not yet fully considered.
Findings

Are opportunities built into the training programmes of teachers to develop knowledge and skills regarding a mediational approach to teaching and learning?

1. The practical application of mediation in the classroom is not addressed (undergraduate & post-graduate studies)

2. Reference is made to the fact that the teacher should become a mediator of learning (roles of educators – 1st year of study). Short theoretical description of what a mediator of learning is.

3. The relevant legislation and policy are not incorporated fully.
Findings

How can a mediational approach be nurtured in teacher training programmes?

1. Intentional self-reflection: planning, monitoring and evaluation

2. Intentional efforts should be made to adapt existing curricula to address the practical implementation of mediated learning: professional study modules
Recommendations

How to acquire self-reflective skills:

1. Explicit instruction

2. Making students aware of the different questions they need to ask during different stages of the learning process:

- Cognitive questions
- Motivational questions
- Environmental questions
Recommendations

3. Allowing students to discover relevant sections in legislation and policy documents:

- Constitution of the RSA Act 108 of 1996
- South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
- National Policy Act 27 of 1996
- Code of Professional Ethics
Conclusions

1. Teachers will not be able to act competently and will not be able to integrate knowledge with skills in diverse situations and will not be capable of reflecting on and learning from own experience.

2. Norms and Standards for Educators and the ideals of the NCS will remain ideals and not become reality.

3. One of the basic aims of the Constitution, that of nurturing and advancing a culture of human rights in teaching and learning, will fall by the roadside…