THE CHANGING ROLE OF TEACHERS:

Transmitters of knowledge and/or mediators of learning?

EASA conference: 12-14 January 2010

NWU: Vaal Triangle Campus

Quest conference centre, Vanderbijlpark

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Introduction: National Curriculum Statement

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

• Learner-centered approach (ideals):
  • Learners responsible for own learning
  • Independent
  • Creative and critical thinkers
  • Solve problems
Rationale

In order to achieve the ideals of a learner-centered approach, teachers have to be cognizant of the relevant Acts that guide teaching and learning in the classroom.
Legal framework

- Constitution Act 108 of 1996
- South African Schools Act
- National Education Policy Act
- Code of Professional Ethics
**Legal framework…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>✓ Constitution Act 108 of 1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑ <strong>Section 29(1):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grants the right to a basic education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑ <strong>Section 28(2):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhances learners’ right to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ South African Schools Act 84 of 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☺ Preamble:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide education of progressively high quality...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... develop talents &amp; capabilities of all South Africans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Legal framework...

✓ Code of Professional Ethics

😊 General stipulations ré teachers:

... acknowledge calling to teach/train
... attitude and dedication of teachers
... acknowledge / uphold basic rights
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…

✔ National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996

😊 Norms and Standards for Educators

... The role of the teacher as mediator of learning
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
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
Reflective 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
Mediation in the classroom

The task of a mediator: translating the knowledge regarding the competences of a mediator into practice

• 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)
• 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
• 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

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

COMPETENCE
• Guard against impulsiveness ("stop a minute let me think")
• Involve learners in self-reflective activities

SELF-REGULATION
AND CONTROL OF
BEHAVIOUR
• 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
• 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
Aims of the study

狷 To determine English educators’ understanding of the concept mediator of learning.
狷 To identify learners’ understanding of how their rights are managed in the English classroom.
狷 To determine whether English educators comply with the principles of mediation during teaching.
狷 To investigate whether English educators accommodate the fundamental rights of learners.
Empirical research

Research design

Quantitative

Questionnaires
- Educators
  - Structured questionnaires
  - 11 teaching English
  - At 3 high schools
- Learners
  - Structured questionnaires
  - 226 Grade 11’s
  - At 3 high schools

Qualitative

Focus group interviews
- 2 focus group interviews
- Structured, open-ended questions
- 3 high schools
- 11 educators teaching English

Observations
- 6 observations
- 2 high schools
- 1 English educator per school – randomly chosen
- 3 observations per school
- English literature
### Empirical research: Biographic data

#### Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>HOD</th>
<th>Educator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = 9,1%</td>
<td>10 = 90,9%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Secondary school</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 = 100%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School locality</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Township</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 = 54,5%</td>
<td>5 = 45,5%</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = 9,1%</td>
<td>10 = 90,9%</td>
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<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>20 – 29</th>
<th>30 – 39</th>
<th>40 – 49</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = 18,2%</td>
<td>5 = 45,5%</td>
<td>4 = 36,4%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>1 – 3</th>
<th>4 – 6</th>
<th>7 – 10</th>
<th>11 – 15</th>
<th>16 – 20</th>
<th>21 – 25</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = 9,1%</td>
<td>4 = 36,4%</td>
<td>3 = 27,3%</td>
<td>2 = 18,2%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 = 9,1%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>REQV 13</th>
<th>REQV 14</th>
<th>REQV 15</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 = 63,6%</td>
<td>2 = 18,2%</td>
<td>2 = 18,2%</td>
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Empirical research: Biographic data

**Learners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>223</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>98,7%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,3%</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>98,7%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>85</th>
<th>37,6%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>136</td>
<td>60,2%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>37,6%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>13</th>
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<th>0,4%</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>0,9%</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0,4%</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>28</th>
<th>12,4%</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>118</th>
<th>52,2%</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>73</th>
<th>32,3%</th>
<th>19+</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1,3%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,4%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0,9%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,4%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12,4%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>52,2%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>32,3%</td>
<td>19+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,3%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School type</th>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>225</th>
<th>99,6%</th>
<th>Combined school</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0,4%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>99,6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,4%</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Town</th>
<th>126</th>
<th>55,8%</th>
<th>Township</th>
<th>96</th>
<th>42,5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>55,8%</td>
<td>Township</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>42,5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Home language | English | 25 | 11,1% | Afrikaans | 45 | 19,9% | Sotho | 120 | 53,1% | Zulu | 14 | 6,2% | Tswana | 4 | 1,8% | Xhosa | 12 | 5,3% | Other | 5 | 2,2% |
|---------------|---------|----|-------|-----------|----|------|-------|------|-------|------|----|------|--------|----|------|-------|----|------|-------|
|               | English | 25 | 11,1% | Afrikaans | 45 | 19,9% | Sotho | 120 | 53,1% | Zulu | 14 | 6,2% | Tswana | 4 | 1,8% | Xhosa | 12 | 5,3% | Other | 5 | 2,2% |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English taken as</th>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>67</th>
<th>29,6%</th>
<th>First Additional</th>
<th>105</th>
<th>46,5%</th>
<th>Second Additional</th>
<th>53</th>
<th>23,5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Language</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>29,6%</td>
<td>First Additional</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>46,5%</td>
<td>Second Additional</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>23,5%</td>
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Empirical research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>Inter-item correlation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EDUCATORS</td>
<td>LEARNERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>0.837</td>
<td>0.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section C</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>0.825</td>
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**TAKE NOTE**

- ☑ Acceptable value for a *Cronbach Alpha* is 0.8
- ☑ Acceptable value for an inter-item correlation = 0.15 - 0.5
### Empirical research

#### Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Valid N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section C</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ B = \text{Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly agree (4)} \]

\[ C = \text{Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly agree (4)} \]
Findings

The following extremities were recorded

SECTION B: MEDIATION IN LEARNING - EDUCATORS

1. Question B4: 9,1% disagreed with the statement that mediators should always provide learners with the reasons for doing things.

2. Question B5: 18,2% disagreed that a mediator believes that thinking skills are more important than learning content.

3. Question B11: 9,1% do not agree that a mediator should assist learners in monitoring his/her own behaviour.

4. Question B13: 18,2% felt that a mediator should not provide opportunities for learners to work together with other learners.
Findings (cont...)

Educators felt strongly about the following

1. Question B16: 63,6% strongly agreed that a mediator should guide learners to take responsibility for their own learning.
2. Question B18: 90,9% agreed that a mediator should encourage change in learners’ behaviour.

SECTION B: MEDIATION IN LEARNING - LEARNERS

A variety of split opinions were marked at the learner’s responses.

1. Question B3: 27,9% disagreed that their educators adapt teaching strategies to learners’ shortcomings.

2. Question B4: a shocking 10,2% strongly disagreed that their educators always provide learners with reasons for doing things.

3. Question B5: 25,7% disagreed that their educators believe that thinking skills are more important than learning content.
Findings (cont…)

4. Question B10: 22,6% felt that their teachers do not provide opportunities for them to feel competent.

5. Question B13: unfortunately 13,3% strongly disagreed that their educators provide opportunities for them to work together with other learners.

6. Question B20: 21,7% disagreed that their educator link lessons to real life experiences.

Learners felt strongly about the following

1. Question B12: 29,2% strongly agreed that their educators encourage learners to think before acting or speaking.

2. Question 18: 25,7% strongly agreed that their educators encourage change in their behaviour.
SECTION C: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS - EDUCATORS

1. Question C5: 18,2% disagreed that a mediator should pace learning according to learners’ different needs.

2. Question C10: 63,6% disagreed that a mediator should organize the portfolios of all learners.

3. Question C12: only 9,1% strongly agreed that a mediator should be able to manage personal stress levels.

Educators felt strongly about the following

1. Question C3: 45,5% strongly agreed that a mediator should enforce school rules.

2. Question C15: 63,6% strongly agreed that a mediator should at all times protect learners’ right to a basic education.
SECTION C: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS - LEARNERS

1. Question C1: 11.5% strongly disagreed that their educators safeguard the interests of all learners.

2. Question C12: a shocking 15.9% strongly disagreed that their educators manage personal stress levels.

3. Question C14: 27.9% disagreed that their educators assess the effect that conflict management has on their learning.

Learners felt strongly about the following

1. Question C3: 29.6% strongly agreed that their educators enforce school rules.

2. Question C9: 29.2% strongly agreed that their educators understand the disciplinary rules of the learning area being taught.
So far: it is apparent that there are educators who do not understand the concept *mediation*.

Bearing in mind that mediation is one of the principles that an educator needs to apply in class, the study shows the contrary.

It was expected that all answers would be marked *strongly agreed*, yet few answers were!!

Learners’ responses proved that their educators are *not* using mediation strategies in class.

When we look at fundamental rights, it is quite obvious that educators feel strongly about disciplinary rules in their schools - unfortunately it also proves that the interests and barriers of learners do not get as much attention as they ought to.

This leaves us with a question: *Are rules more important than paying attention to barriers learners experience in school?*
Recommendations

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

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

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…
Thank You