Comparing Western Teaching and Learning with Confucian Teaching and Learning

Victor Wang
Florida Atlantic University, vcxwang@gmail.com
Comparing Confucian Teaching and Learning with Western Teaching and Learning

Victor C. X. Wang, Associate Professor/PhD Mentor
Did you know?

• "An essential aspect of maturing is developing the ability to take increasing responsibility for our own lives - to become increasingly self-directed."

• -Malcolm Knowles, Educator
Self-Directed Learning

• Why self-directed learning? Malcolm Knowles:

1. Self-directed learners are better learners: ‘people who take the initiative in learning... learn more things, and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught.’

2. Adults do not need teachers, in the sense that they are perfectly capable of taking charge of their own learning. Therefore, ‘self-directed learning is more in tune with our natural processes of psychological development’.
Self-Directed Learning

3. The de-institutionalization of education, in the form of open and independent learning systems, is creating a need for learners to develop appropriate skills. ‘Students entering into these programs without having learned the skills of self-directed inquiry will experience anxiety, frustration and often failure, and so will their teachers.’ (Knowles, 1975)
Andragogy?

**My publications**

- Knowles popularized andragogy in North America.
- Unique definition.
- Six assumptions about adult learning.
- Educators began to advocate teaching higher order thinking skills.
- My article by *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: Adult Teaching Methods in China and Bloom’s Taxonomy
The Staged Self-Directed Learning Model by Gerald Grow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Authority, coach</td>
<td>Coaching with immediate feedback. Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Motivator, guide</td>
<td>Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Involved</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Self-directed</td>
<td>Consultant, delegator</td>
<td>Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.</td>
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Western Culture Supports Confucian Pedagogy?

• Do Chinese learners learn differently?
• Widespread agreement about what educational conditions encourage good learning. Effective learning is likely to take place in teaching environments with the following characteristics (Biggs, 1996):

1. Teaching methods are varied, emphasizing student activity, self-regulation and student-centeredness, with much cooperative and other group work.
Western Culture Supports Confucian Pedagogy cont.?

2. Content is presented in a meaningful context.
3. Classes are small.
4. Classroom climate is warm.
5. High cognitive level outcomes are expected and addressed in assessment.
6. Assessment is classroom-based and conducted in a non-threatening atmosphere.
On this basis, many East Asian educational systems must be producing low quality learning. Westerners who teach students from societies such as Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and other “Confucian-Heritage Cultures” (CHCs) frequently comment that they prefer didactic teaching and rote learning to critical thinking, and treat their teacher as an unchallengeable authority. This applies whether the students are studying in East Asia or in the West. In East Asian countries, classes are normally large (typically well over 40). Teachers lecture a lot, and focus closely on getting the best results in externally set examinations.
Western Culture Supports Confucian Pedagogy Cont.?

• Examinations tend to focus on lower level cognitive goals, are highly competitive, and put intense pressures on students and teachers alike. Expenditures on education have been much lower per capita than in the West (even in such affluent countries as Singapore and Hong Kong), and resources and support services, such as counseling, are poorer.

• At the same time, students from CHCs achieve far more than their Western counterparts. For example, overseas higher education students from CHCs studying in the USA perform much better than their IQ levels would predict.
Western Culture Supports Confucian Pedagogy cont.? 

There is an important distinction between ‘rote learning’—mechanistic and without thought—and learning which uses repetition as a strategy to ensure accurate recall. If learning aims at understanding, and repetition is a means to this, it can be a strategy for deep rather than surface learning. It is a mistake to assume that all use of repetition in learning is a ‘surface’ approach: the key is in the context of the technique, rather than the specific technique itself.
International Test of Practical Knowledge in Reading, Math, and Science 2009 (PISA); 2013 Results more or less the same

- It’s the first time that students from mainland China have participated PISA, which compares the performance of 15-year-olds from 60 nations and half a dozen so-called regional economies.
- The results show that the United States continues to trail much of the industrialized world and the rising economies in Asia.
Reading: Average Score 493/USA 17th
Math: Average Score 496/USA 31rd
Science: United States 23rd
Bloom’s Taxonomy gives us guidance about writing cognitive objectives

High Order Thinking Skills

- Evaluation
- Synthesis
- Analysis
- Application
- Comprehension

Low Order Thinking Skills

- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Remembering

Click here to access the list of action verbs used in writing objectives

Original
- Creating
- Evaluating
- Analyzing
- Applying
- Understanding
- Remembering

Revised
Simply put, the taxonomy represents how we learn

- Before we can understand a concept, we have to remember it.
- Before we can apply the concept, we must understand it.
- Before we analyze it, we must be able to apply it.
- Before we can evaluate its impact, we must have analyzed it.
- Before we can create we must have remembered, understood, applied, analyzed, and evaluated.
There’re 3 learning domains that we can base it on:

- **Cognitive**
  - Thinking Skills
- **Affective**
  - Attitude & Feelings
- **Psychomotor**
  - Physical Skills

Click to read more about a bonus domain: INTERPERSONAL
In learning, everything depends on the...

Each element of a unit of instruction must align with the objective.

Click each button to learn more about each element of a unit of instruction.

The **content** introduces what the objective is aiming to teach the learner.

An **activity** helps the learner practice and accomplish the objective.

The **assessment** evaluates if the learner is able to accomplish the objective.
A Road Map for the Learning Process
Confucian learners buy into Carl Rogers’ self-directed learning model

- Educational psychologists’ views for the sake of competency development:

Carl Rogers:

1. Personal involvement. The whole person, including his or her feelings and cognitive aspects, are involved in the learning event.
Competency development and self-directed learning

2. Self-initiation. Even when the impetus or stimulus comes from the outside, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending, comes from within.

3. Pervasiveness. Learning makes a difference in the behavior, attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner.
Competency development and self-directed learning

4. Evaluation by the learner. The learner knows whether the learning meets personal need, whether it leads toward what the individual wants to know, whether it illuminates the dark area of ignorance the individual is experiencing.

5. Its essence is meaning. When such learning takes place, the element of meaning to the learner is built into the whole experience. (Rogers, 1969)
Implications for Western Educators?

- ??? 60 fly in from Shanghai to promote methods
- ???
- I can be reached at vcxwang@gmail.com
- Or 561-799-8716.