

Posterpresentation IKIT Summerinstitute 2007

Title: "Deeper understanding on different levels"

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Statement of the issue:

Knowledge Building was used in an experimental group with students in teacher-education. In the competence-based program of Stoas Professional University they used Knowledge Building and Knowledge Forum as starting point to build their competences on "coaching pupils in vocational education". In the curriculum described as a professional situation, including several sub-competences like 'recognize problems from child-behavior', 'building and keeping a good relation with a child', 'supporting choices in the learning process', etc.

It was for the students, as well as for the teacher, the first time we worked with Knowledge Building and Knowledge Forum. This approach was initiated by attending the IKIT SummerInstitute 2006 and the decision to try to work with a Knowledge Building group to give energy to my research on "supportive learning in competence based education". Knowledge Building means to me a paradigm-shift on the way competence based education was performed. Parallel to the researchgroup a comparable group of students followed the same professional situation, in the regular approach. E.g. a dual situation of working in agricultural secondary vocational schools, following supportive 'lessons' and 'elaboration time', to work on topics or related learning tasks. In contrast the Knowledge Building group use the elaboration time to work on their own ideas of 'coaching pupils' and used the supportive lessons as 'expert' input for their ideas. As a teacher I was supported by a the second author who is more familiar with the Knowledge Building principles and used various Knowledge Forum version with university students in the past. However he was less familiar with our higher education student population. We both reflected a lot of what worked with the university students in relation to what worked and did not work with the current group of students. These reflection on our Knowledge Building praxis was the basis for the preparation of the following 'Knowledge Building meeting' and interventions we did in order to facilitate the Knowledge Building of the students.

After five months the Knowledge Building group and myself as teacher-researcher concluded that the following levels of deeper understanding was achieved.

1. *Understanding Knowledge Building and Knowledge Forum*

Students were easily motivated to work with the Knowledge Building approach and the Knowledge Forum facilities. Working and discussing together we discovered the difference between shallow and deep constructivism and working in design mode instead of belief mode (Bereiter, 2006).

Quote of students Annelies and Bart: "By reading the notes and opinions of others we are able to review our opinion and we can try out another approach. It enriches our possibilities and we become more expert on coaching pupils".

2. *Deeper understanding of learning processes*

Although "learning processes" was not the subject of the students attention (that was: coaching pupils in vocational education), we developed a different approach of competence based education. In the Knowledge Building time the issue was improving ideas of coaching as experienced by students during three days a week at schools. The learning process shifted from task- and activity-oriented to idea-improvement and cognitive responsibility (Scardamalia, 2001).

Quote of student Ellen: "Working with Knowledge Building changed my attitude from 'what do they want me to do for school?' to 'how can I be a better coach for my pupils and what do I have to learn for that?'"

3. *Deeper understanding of competences*

Competences to build (i.e. recognize problems from child-behavior; coaching dialogue; professional distance; building and keeping a good relation with a child; etc.) are rather vague described in levels to achieve. Working with the idea of coaching and the need to make clear what these competences are about, gave students a deeper understanding of the competences.

4. *Deeper understanding of the changing role of the teacher.*

Competence-based education is a new way of learning. It requires a different role of the teacher. It seems that the teachers role is besides being the expert, also the facilitator and stimulator of the learning-process. Working with Knowledge Building it became clear, in the beginning, that students are still expecting tasks and activities to fulfill. Strange enough students still show a depend in their behaviour on teacher regulation by obligated learning task assignments although in our competence directed educational process we assume a student directedness. During the process it became clear that my teacher behavior should change from a type A or B teacher (giving explicit or implicit no strategic cognitive activity to the students) to a type C teacher. At the end of the process students became more and more responsible for their own learning. An attitude achieved by a process that we discovered together: students, teacher-researcher and lector.

Data of the research are presented at the poster.

- evaluation of students
- data of Knowledge Forum items (mutual views, notes, build-ons, analyzing tools, community growth)
- results of students in the research and the control-group.

What to achieve in a dialogue on basis of the poster.

Is a Knowledge Building approach within a competence based education a form of collective cognitive responsibility in the workplace; because that is the ultimo place where students build on their competences also in the context of human resource development; or is it a shared responsibility of a learning community e.g. students, workplace and university (teachers)?. Should it, because of the focus on the workplace, be better to build the learning community around the students workplaces, in stead of around the supportive learning at the university?. Can interaction in Knowledge Forum by students in different learning workplaces really enhance the idea-diversity and create a deeper cognitive development and idea-improvement as a knowledge base in the competences to build. And therefore be an alternative for the not always just in time 'subjects'in the lesson-based curriculum?

Bert Reijnen

References

- Bereiter, C. and Scardamalia, M. 2006 *Tools and Strategies for Democratizing Innovative Capacity*.
Presentation at the IKIT Summerinstitute 2006
- Scardamalia, M. 2001 *Collective Cognitive Responsibility for the Advancement of Knowledge*.