

Chapter 2.11

Self-Regulated Learning: Issues and Challenges for Initial Teacher Training

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ABSTRACT

This chapter assumes the importance of developing Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) competences in students in order to cope with the challenges of today's and tomorrow's society. To achieve this, it is claimed that it is crucial to train teachers who are aware of what SRL is and are able to support their students in developing these abilities. This chapter proposes examples drawn from a course in Educational Technology where SRL competence has been promoted through reflection on cognitive, meta-cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects of learning, as well as through modelling teaching practices that tend to shift the locus of control from trainers to trainees.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a very hard job. It has always been hard, but it has become even more difficult and crucial in the so called knowledge society, where the major assets of its citizens do not lie in the amount of information and skills they possess, but in their ability to acquire knowledge and competence and in the way they can make use of both.

In this view, the aim of education is not to make learners know all there is to know about a given subject, but rather to make them able to build, enrich and nurture their own knowledge. Hence, what teachers should do is provide their students with some very basic and carefully chosen notions and concepts and with the ability, the will, the conceptual and technological tools needed to elaborate on them. This is why teach-

ing is so difficult: because it is about empowering people, putting them in charge of their learning and teaching them how to control it by making them aware of how to choose the best learning strategies. But there is even more. Today we do not want to leave anybody behind, neither do we wish to mortify talents or betray excellence. This entails achieving personalised learning, thereby giving each learner the chance to fully exploit their potential. And this makes teaching even more difficult, in that it requires decisions about how to foster learning for each student, by adapting, controlling and assessing the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

However, there is some good news: learners can, and should, help in the realization of this process. They can, and should, become aware of their learning styles, learn to evaluate their results, exploit ICT to acquire, evaluate and elaborate knowledge. Teachers will have to provide scaffolds for learning by modelling how to carry out authentic tasks, by offering situated learning opportunities; by providing chances for learners to collaborate and therefore support each other in this process.

But how can we train teachers for such a hard job?

According to Paris and Winograd (2001) the best way is by using, with trainee teachers, the same approach we expect them to use with their students. They claim that it is a frequent paradox that teachers are often trained with methods that contradict the principles they are being taught. Teachers naturally tend to replicate the same teaching approach they have experienced. This accounts for their resistance to the educational use of technology, their tendency to engage in perfunctory curriculum delivery, their focus on contents rather than on learning methods.

In this paper, we will use the case of a course in Educational Technology run by the Institute for Educational Technology of the Italian National Research Council for the Post-Graduate School

in Secondary Teaching of the University of Genoa to discuss and exemplify the following points:

- If the aim is to train teachers about Educational Technology, then Educational Technology must be used to do so;
- It is impossible to teach future teachers all there is to know about Educational Technology: a much more sensible approach is to identify some basic concepts and to lay the bases for further autonomous professional development;
- Awareness about the importance of self-regulation in the teaching profession should also be promoted, because instructional design in education cannot be reduced to rigid decision making procedures;
- If teachers must empower their students and make them able to become better and more autonomous learners, they will first need to learn to self regulate their own learning. To this end, they should receive explicit training on what self-regulated learning is, how it can be promoted and what its relationships with the use of Educational Technology and with the most popular learning theories are.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this chapter lies at the crossroads between two fields: the psychological theories of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) and the interdisciplinary sector of Networked Learning (NL).

When we talk about the importance of developing a learner's ability to successfully cope with the challenges of today's and tomorrow's society, we acknowledge that this ability involves cognitive, meta-cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects. The theory of SRL subsumes research on these aspects in one coherent construct emphasising

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