Chapter 10
Learning and Knowing: Perspective in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to establish a clear distinction between learning and knowing. The chapter states that, in higher education learning, facilitates transfer of knowledge and builds the proposition that in higher education, learning essentially takes place when students construct meaning from various instructional messages. The authors build the discussion using literature and illustrate the argument using two cases to substantiate how learning and knowing are two different aspects. They argue that learning and knowing cannot be used interchangeably. The aim of higher education is to prepare students for the real world and the classroom is the simulated environment where students collaborate and learning facilitates transfer of knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of education is to develop individuals to their utmost potential (Dewey, 2010), This can be accomplished by providing an environment which creates conditions for the overall development of humanity by engaging everyone in the process so that each one is at once profitable in the deepest sense of the world (Dewey, 2012). The term higher education refers to education beyond secondary level. This pattern of education is provided by a college or a university. The first universities emerged during the eleventh century in Europe. The only mission of early universities was to impart education. Over the years, change in the environment propelled change in the mission of the universities. By the nineteenth century the universities transformed into 'laboratories' that have constantly conducted experiments to produce innovative ways of managing the economy, and imparting education and learning to the students. This chapter aims to establish the following:

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- A clear distinction between learning and knowing in the domain of higher education.
- In higher education learning, facilitates transfer of knowledge.
- In higher education, learning essentially takes place when students construct meaning from various instructional messages.

In higher education messages can be transferred using reflective exercises, role play based teaching, experiential exercises and case based methods. The aim of higher education is to build capability in students so that they are able to work with the real world and be progressive. Higher education can be effective by the use of a constructivist approach through inquiry and discovery learning. Academic success through knowing is a result of repetition or rehearsal (Morton, 2011), on the contrary learning is essentially a result of doing (Cope & Watts, 2000). In higher education, the classroom thus acts as a simulated environment of the real world in which the student learns for the future growth and progress. The aim of higher education can be nourished and fulfilled with Dewey's philosophy of education. At the heart of his philosophy is experience, which emphasises on the inclusion of student experience as a part of the curriculum (Carver & Enfield, 2006). Experiences are a result of interaction with the environment, past habits and attitudes and beliefs and prior knowledge and emotions. Through a constructivist approach, students have the opportunity to explore, relate and think critically which is otherwise absent in rote learning.

BACKGROUND

Knowing is a state of mind (Williamson, 1995). It is to be in a new kind of state, the essence of which involves the world around us. It extends beyond belief. Knowing is manifested through saying and doing (Samra-Fredericks, 2005). It transpires through mastery of vocabulary and facilitates the collective workings of different knowings (Nicolini, 2011). In higher education, students exchange and share their knowings. These knowings are either shared using vocabulary or by practice. When shared by vocabulary they move within members through symbolic exchanges, and abstract processes of coordination and alignment. When shared by practice and participation within members learning takes place. Learning is defined as knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field of scholarly application. The scientific definition of learning: A relatively permanent change in behaviour due to experience (King, 2008). Any discussion in learning is faced with arguments to describe what learning is and what it involves. The contributing literature presents diverse views which makes it immensely complex for the researchers and practitioners in this field (Nicolini, 1995). Learning is further mystified by the notion of 'potential' to behave differently (Huber, 1991); (Gibb, 1995). Using knowing and learning interchangeably, or classifying learning under various stages only complicates the literature for academics and practitioners. A clear and distinctive classification can facilitate understanding of learning and knowing and inhibit complexity. In elementary or secondary school the students are encouraged to be rote learners and memorize all facts and figures without understanding what they are doing. Limited emphasis on enquiry and significant focus on memorizing encapsulates the teaching environment. Usually the teacher is writing on the board explaining how to do problems, and explaining the concept and the students are supposed to emulate what she/he has done. The teacher would always explain something as an example or do a sample problem and then seek answers from students on a similar example with minute differences. The outcome of this exercise is stated by Dreyfus and Eisenberg "digestive process rather than a creative