

Chapter 8

Instructor–Learner Partnership in Preparing Teacher Candidates to Teach Secondary School Students: A Learner–Centered Educational Psychology Course

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ABSTRACT

Teacher preparation programs in the United States are expected to educate preservice teacher candidates through instructor-learner partnerships. Collaborative learning, project-based learning, and authentic assessment therefore are vital for preparing teacher candidates to teach in 7-12 grades. This chapter shares instances of instructor-learner partnership from an undergraduate educational psychology course via course-based and field-based assignments. First, an overview of constructivism is presented as foundational theory anchoring instructor-learner partnership in the teacher preparation course. Next, instructor-learner partnership is illustrated within a simulation task, technology-enhanced project, and fieldwork experience. Finally, instructor-learner partnership in formative assessment of course-based and field-based activities are illustrated. The chapter concludes with recommendations for inculcating instructor-learner partnership in teacher education courses, and directions for future research pertinent to instructor-learner partnership in teacher preparation programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher preparation programs in the United States have had to reconceptualize their instructional approaches in recent years due to establishment of accreditation standards that call for increased accountability (Cochran-Smith et al., 2017). Consequently, teacher educators are expected to not only teach pedagogical content but to also integrate instructional approaches that could advance teacher candidates' ability to effectively teach in PreK-12 classes. Teacher educators therefore can no longer depend only on teacher-directed approaches such as lecturing as their primary method of instruction, but also have to incorporate diverse student-centered approaches like groupwork and projects. A shift from traditional pedagogy, where learners are passive recipients of information, to modern pedagogy, involving active participation in knowledge construction, is necessary for better retention of knowledge (Vanhorn, et al., 2019).

This chapter presents cases of instructor-learner partnership from an educational psychology course wherein preservice teacher candidates from diverse teacher certification content areas (e.g., art education, English education, mathematics education, physical education, and science education) are prepared to teach in secondary schools, grades 7-12. First, constructivist view for learner-centered instruction is reviewed to highlight the significance of social learning as a context for authentic activities incorporated within the educational psychology course for developing the knowledge, skills, and disposition of teacher candidates. Next, learner-centered activities are illustrated to pinpoint instructor-learner partnership in preparation of teacher candidates to teach secondary school students. Illustrations of learner-centered activities include: 1) Simulation of research-supported teaching and learning approaches, 2) Demonstration of technology-enhanced teaching and learning approaches, and 3) Analyses of field-based teaching and learning practices. Thereafter, effectiveness of instructor-learner partnership in teacher candidates' preparation to teach secondary school students is discussed. Evidence of effectiveness has been derived from: 1) learners' evaluation of course-based and field-based activities, and 2) course instructor's evaluation of course-based and field-based activities. Finally, recommendations for strengthening instructor-learner partnership in teacher preparation courses as well as directions for future research are discussed.

BACKGROUND

Constructivist View of Learning

Constructivist view of learning is based on the premises that learners acquire knowledge by actively investigating and manipulating complex information encountered within their learning space. Findings from Borba, Alves, and Campagnolo (2020) study indicated that there was important relationship between learning space and student engagement in learning as well as student-faculty interactions in higher education. Teaching approaches adopted within the constructivist view is customarily student-centered, wherein the teacher is a facilitator, guide, and mediator and the learner, a designer, manager, and evaluator of one's own knowledge construction (Vanhorn et al., 2019).

Interactions with teachers and peers, another salient element of constructivist view of learning, contribute towards acquisition of information. In addition to emphasizing teacher and peer interactions, constructivist view of learning also advocates teacher-mediated learning and peer-assisted learning as student-centered approaches for building higher thinking such as problem-solving (Bruner, 1985).

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