

Chapter 1

New Educational Mission: School as Students' Aspiration Builder

Aneta Mechi

University of Geneva, Switzerland

ABSTRACT

The last chapter proposes to go not only beyond the epistemic dimension to improve it, but also beyond the lesson content. The German's lesson shows how easily we can exceed students' expectations and arouse their curiosity, enthusiasm, and learning investment. If we aspire to decrease school violence, bullying, and delinquency, a new educational mission would be to surpass teaching without necessarily being demanding or time-consuming. Indeed, making use of the relational dimension—using the multiple intelligence and STEAM approaches to include students through competence—seems to refer to the new school mission as an aspiration builder rather than a selection referee and inducer of discouragement.

Although the complementarity of two educational dimensions benefits students and teachers, and thus is one of the more important tools in effective teaching, teachers can go beyond any dimension and beyond prepared lesson content by providing students with the cross-domain knowledge that is likely to be useful in other disciplines and in everyday life in general.

BEYOND THE LEARNING MATERIAL

Selection and exclusion in a current school system leave many students behind the windowpane of learning to such an extent that young people have already internalized their sense of being “good for nothing;” they do not see themselves as anything but social outcasts. What are the consequences of this? In the vein of social affirmation theory, since the professional and citizen doors are closed, students struggle for recognition in other fields such as delinquency, aggressiveness, dropping out, gang activity, trafficking or taking drugs, or social violence. They search to be good at something and competent somewhere—hence, students focus on hurting those who remain behind. They refuse to become motivated to learn, to work,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6315-4.ch001

to contribute to the development of society. By rejecting their enthusiasm, we push them into developing their competence in an antisocial manner. The most resilient people spend their adult lifetimes curing their traumas and the after-effects of rejection, passing down to their children the fear and hatred of school, the blockages for various domains, and a lack of investment due to the sense of injustice. Is the school the peacebuilder if it excludes and marginalizes?

Is another scenario possible? If the educational system can focus on epistemic inclusion by helping build professional or career projects while basing itself on the complementarity of the epistemic and relational dimensions, then teachers will have better conditions to coach insightful, responsible, and radiant citizens who continue their lifelong learning and personal development.

Rubie-Davies' inspiration was Rhona Weinstein's book *Reaching Higher: The Power of Expectations in Schooling* (2002). The work is extremely thought-provoking, and in a way, disturbing, because the complacency of the educational system is shaken to its core. Indeed, in this kind of selective configuration, it is difficult to foster students' tremendous excitement for knowledge and teachers' capability in teaching all students to strive to fulfill their potential—to see their uniqueness and to truly believe that they are capable of developing many competences and succeeding. It is a shame that many teachers do not have enough tools to identify the competences of allophone students, to identify students' needs on the epistemic or relational dimensions, or to overcome stereotypes and prejudices. It is a shame that the educational system of the 21st century, despite ideological and technological progress, creates a huge amount of frustration and people who are anti-school instead of being reflective, lifelong learners who use critical thinking in their everyday lives. Thus, not only finding tools, but knowing how to use them with disadvantaged students seems to be a crucial challenge for our education system. It is also an opportunity to close the achievement gap and decrease the frustration that generates aggressive behavior and anxiety toward schooling, learning, and thinking that mobilizes attentional resources and decreases students' performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). Also, the need for belonging can lead to antisocial behaviors; the perception of difference from the norm can be an origin of stigmatization, ostracism, or bullying. This is why it is important to provide students with more than disciplinary knowledge—to teach them not by limited boundaries, but to go beyond the discipline, showing them that cross-domain content is useful for everyday life. This kind of approach is possible not only with huge STEM projects, but also during each lesson. Students with teachers who provide them with more than what is expected by the program feel valued in their teachers' eyes. They feel respected and feel that they deserve more than the minimum. This encourages students to invest themselves in class, in schooling, and in society in general.

German Lesson: When a Lesson Exceeds Students' Expectations

In her German class of 12- to 13-year-old students, Elisabeth prepared a didactic sequence of eight hours devoted to a project of written and oral expression. For seven hours of class, students were put in groups of four. Together, each group invented a character and wrote 400 words of text about the character. They then copied their text onto large pieces of cardboard, the colors of which they had chosen. They embellished the boards with illustrations and various decorative elements selected on their own.

This learning sequence aimed to prepare the boards for oral presentation. Each group presented its main character to the rest of the class. The students spoke fluently. They expressed themselves using short and clear sentences that others had no difficulty understanding. Observing students followed with

12 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/new-educational-mission/308207

Related Content

Repairing Relationships Mediatorship: An Integrated Framework Engendering Conflict Wisdom
(2026). *Autoethnography as a Tool for Integral Human Development and Wayfinding* (pp. 327-344).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/repairing-relationships-mediatorship/404493

Mitigating Mass Violence and Managing Threats in Contemporary Society: The Red Flags of a Serial Killer

Tina Marie Zink (2021). *Mitigating Mass Violence and Managing Threats in Contemporary Society* (pp. 35-47).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/mitigating-mass-violence-and-managing-threats-in-contemporary-society/279686

Student Trauma, the Hidden Curriculum, and Cultural Humility: This Trio Needs a Team Approach

Dana C. Branson (2021). *Research Anthology on Navigating School Counseling in the 21st Century* (pp. 44-62).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/student-trauma-the-hidden-curriculum-and-cultural-humility/280996

Leaders With Spirit: Implications for Contemporary Workplaces

Basak Ucanok Tan (2021). *Handbook of Research on Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Managerial and Leadership Psychology* (pp. 62-79).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/leaders-with-spirit/270804

The Story and the Dilemma

(2018). *Narratives and the Role of Philosophy in Cross-Disciplinary Studies: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 1-18).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-story-and-the-dilemma/205274