The Nature of Learning in the ILE Case Studies

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How can the learning principles be put into practice in real educational settings?

The Nature of Learning
USING RESEARCH TO INSPIRE PRACTICE

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➢ The ILE Inventory cases provide a rich database to answer this question

➢ The Inventory Cases have been chosen because they aim to foster "adaptive competence" – the capability to apply knowledge and skills flexibly and creatively in a variety of different contexts – using innovative practices

➢ Analysis of common features of the ILE Inventory cases

The Learning Principles in the ILE Inventory Cases

LEARNER CENTERDNESS

The learning environment recognizes the learners as its core participants, encourages their active engagement, and develops in them an understanding of their own activity as learners.

LEARNER CENTERDNESS

- Students are accountable for planning, organising, and monitoring their own learning process

- Students mostly work individually or in groups

- Tasks and assignments are developed by students and teachers together

- Teachers support, advice and give guidance

- There are no pre-developed units of work for all students

- Teachers sometimes serve as the source of information in short periods of "direct instruction" targeted to small groups of students

SOCIAL NATURE OF LEARNING

The learning environment is founded on the social nature of learning and actively encourages well-organised co-operative learning.

SOCIAL NATURE OF LEARNING

- Co-operative learning is a big part of students daily life

- Oftentimes supported by new technologies, such as discussion boards, blogs, chat-rooms or "e-classrooms"

- Mixed age groups as a way to foster social learning

- Social skills are encouraged through practices such as voluntary work in the community or mentoring programs among students

- Students and teachers meet regularly to discuss interpersonal problems

- Social skills are integrated in the assessment strategies

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RESPONSIVENESS TO MOTIVATIONS AND EMOTIONS

The learning professionals within the learning environment are highly attuned to the learners' motivations and the key role of emotions in achievement.

MOTIVATIONS AND EMOTIONS

- By directing their own learning process, students can choose topics that interest them

- Students are involved in decision making processes

- Individual verbalised feedback helps students to focus on their qualities and their progress instead of their weaknesses and deficits

- Teachers are not only responsible for students academic achievements, but also for their well-being

- Students are encouraged to reflect on their own emotions and motivations

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SENSITIVITY TO INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

The learning environment is acutely sensitive to the individual differences among the learners in it, including their prior knowledge.

The learning environment devises programmes that demand hard work and challenge from all without excessive overload.

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INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

- Individual differences between students are not seen as a problem, but as an enrichment

- Heterogeneous learning groups are deliberately created

- Students with disabilities, special needs or behavioural problems are integrated

- Individualized learning tasks and assignments are developed by teachers and students together

- "Open learning periods" are an important part of the school day, where each student works on something different

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USE OF ASSESSMENT

The learning environment operates with clarity of expectations and deploys assessment strategies consistent with these expectations; there is strong emphasis on formative feedback to support learning.

USE OF ASSESSMENT

- Assessments focus on the learning process, not only on the product of learning

- Portfolios are often used instead of or in addition to a grading system

- Self-assessments and peer-assessments are very common

- Parents and external partners in the community are involved in the assessment

- Students are assessed on a wide range of outcomes: academic achievement, social skills, meta-cognitive skills, and self-regulatory skills

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HORIZONTAL CONNECTEDNESS

The learning environment strongly promotes "horizontal connectedness" across areas of knowledge and subjects as well as to the community and the wider world.

HORIZONTAL CONNECTEDNESS

- The curriculum is organised around real-world problems instead of separate subjects

- Learning often takes place in co-operation with universities, the local business world, libraries, museums, theatres, or sports clubs

- In many cases, the world is brought to the classroom with the help of online communication

- Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in school life and can even participate in learning activities in some cases

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Conclusions

➢ Most practices address several principles at the same time

➢ Many practices go hand in hand with a more open and flexible use of space and time

➢ All cases report high levels of teacher collaboration and commitment to professional learning: The learning principles are applied to the teachers!

The ILE Inventory Cases can serve as encouragement and inspiration for learning environments around the world that want to make change at the micro level happen!