

Concise Descriptions of the Beliefs that Underlie the Three Levels of Teaching

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Following is a description of beliefs that drive teachers. We have divided these “points of view” into three different approaches to teaching. Each approach is fundamentally valid yet different, and results in three different beliefs about how to maximize learning. These different beliefs determine their approach to teaching.

Summarizing Traditional Teacher’s Beliefs :

1. What constitutes knowledge, learning, and teaching ?

- Knowledge, learning, and teaching refer to having students master essential skills, information and procedures.

2. What needs to happen in any learning environment?

- Essential skills, information, and procedures are transmitted from those who know to those who need to know.
- Teaching requires structured plans in order to systematize academic input and successful mastery by students.

3. How is knowledge mastered?

- Basic knowledge and basic skills stay the same from year to year. Once students have the basics they can go on to add more advanced skills, information and procedures.

4. What is the role of power and control in learning?

- Student/Teacher relationship is “top down” and confined to issues focused on the curriculum.
- Maintaining discipline is the responsibility of the teacher and is critical to student learning (defined as essential skills, information and procedures).

5. How do you assess learning?

- Essential skills, information and procedures have been learned when students can demonstrate that they they have replicated what was taught.
- Essential skills, information and procedures can be quantified and tested to document mastery.

Summarizing Transitional Teacher's Beliefs:

1. What constitutes knowledge, learning, and teaching?

- Knowledge, learning, and teaching are defined as an active process where students participate in a variety of ways in order to arrive at essential skills, information and procedures. There are multiple pathways, methods, and approaches utilized to achieve this.

2. What needs to happen in any learning environment?

- Knowledge is seen as going beyond essential skills, information and procedures in order to include evidence of self directed learning that requires application and evidence of higher order thinking.
- Knowledge is deepened by allowing students to bring their unique meanings to bear on the curriculum.
- Advances in the curriculum are driven by student questions, research and an ongoing discussion and understanding as to what constitutes the highest standards.

3. How is knowledge mastered?

- Teaching is both structured and unstructured. It is guided by standards and essential disciplinary skills but how these are learned is open to interpretation by both students and teachers.

4. What is the role of power and control in learning?

- Student/Teacher relationships need to be more egalitarian in order to increase student responsibility and commitment to learning. It involves student participation in decisions that affect both student behavior and pursuit of higher academic standards.

5. How do you assess learning?

- Students can demonstrate their learning in multiple and unique ways including but not limited to standardized tests. Authentic assessments that include evidence of mastery using unique perspectives, talents, "intelligences" and creativity supplement tests that largely focus on questions limited to true and false or multiple choice formats.

Summarizing Transformational Teacher's Beliefs:

1. What constitutes knowledge, learning, and teaching?

- Knowledge is seen as evolving and changing on the basis of individual and collective learning.
- Learning is rarely linear, but rather relies on complex experiences that engage critical questions and require research from resources including experts, real world experience and feedback and the World Wide Web.
- Teaching requires the simultaneous engagement of multiple student capacities for learning (Brain/ Mind Capacities).

2. What needs to happen in any learning environment?

- Teaching is what happens when students and teachers engage in research, continuous processing and documentation of what is being learned. Learning is multilayered and active processing results in the solidification of learning.

3. How is knowledge mastered?

- Knowledge is deepened and expended through ongoing feedback from multiple sources. Teaching and learning occur in "real time," rarely from a script of any kind.

4. What is the role of power and control in learning?

- Knowledge that is actor centered is more highly valued.
- Metacognition that includes reflection and learning about oneself is critical.
- Student/ teacher relationships and responsibilities are respectful and shared across the board.

5. How do you assess learning?

- Students demonstrate what they have learned in an infinite variety of ways all being held to the highest standards.
- Knowledge includes quantifiable results but largely requires application that can be evaluated by experts in the field (not just teachers) who have the ability to judge complex projects and research.