

Situated Learning Agency and A Systemic Approach to the Development of Competence

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ABSTRACT

Learning I In the paper, I introduce an integrative systemic framework that conceptualizes the development of competence as a process of ongoing interactions between individual learners (their achievement motivation, deliberate practice, and learning outcomes) and social environment (represented by developmental resources and demands). In this context, I discuss the role of “situated agency” in learning development and explore how learning individuals may effectively act as active agents of their learning, as well as individual and social conditions that enable and prevent such agency.

I begin with a critical analysis of different psychological theories providing competing constructions of human learning potential, which I label “theories of giftedness”, “theories of practice”, and “theories of motivation.” I explore contradictory ways in which these theories construct key factors that determine successful development of learning potential to adult professional competence. Based on this comparison, I discuss the limitations of these theoretical approaches stemming from their philosophical, methodological, and ideological backgrounds, including disproportionate emphasis on selected developmental factors, implicit one-way causality, and the dominant role of an individual over social influences. I argue further that the discrepancies of these psychological theories might be reconciled within a systemic framework that acknowledges the complexity of reciprocal interactions between the key developmental factors proposed by the psychological approaches. I implement this systemic framework as an analytic tool in a series of studies which illustrate the systemic nature of the competence development and I discuss benefits of such systemic approach for theory as well as educational practice.

KEYWORDS:

Competence Development, Situated Agency in Learning, Integrative Systemic Framework